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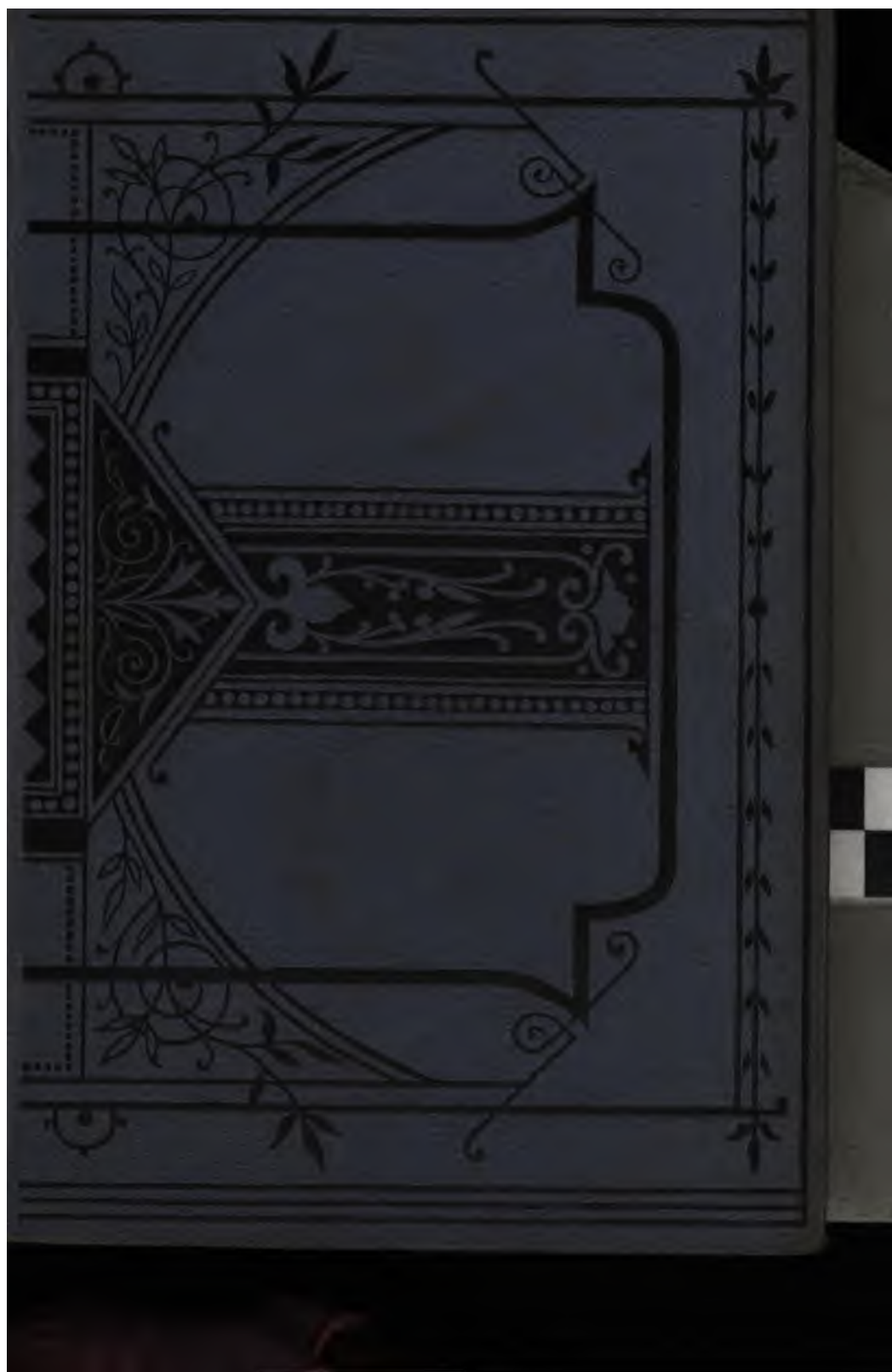
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THE
LORD HERMITAGE

A Novel

BY
JAMES GRANT

AUTHOR OF "THE ROMANCE OF WAR," ETC.



IN THREE VOLUMES—VOL. II.

London
CHATTO & WINDUS, PICCADILLY

1878

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251 . e . 477 .

LONDON:
PRINTED BY J. OGDEN AND CO.,
179, ST. JOHN STREET, E.C.

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THE LORD HERMITAGE.

CHAPTER I.

JULIAN'S PROFITABLE INVESTMENT.

SEPARATED now from his brother, and left utterly alone among strangers, Julian's affectionate heart was ever going back in memory to the pleasant days of their boyhood—their games, their school-days, and tasks conned together ; and to an old attic in the house at Fairy Knowe, where they had been wont to play together for hours and hours in the wet days of autumn, and the stormy ones of winter. How distinctly he could recall every feature of its dusty couples and rafters, its shadowy and uncertain depths, with the roar of the rain on the tiles without ; and all the old chests, boxes, nooks, and corners of the place, with broken furniture left to rot and decay, old forgotten books, and garments,

too, in which to act a ghost or Robinson Crusoe ; and as he thought of that old attic, and what an endless source of fun it had been to him and Gerard, when lingering amid the bustle of the Strand or the semi-quietude of the river side, he felt that no rampart, not even one like the wall of China, could impart in after life the sense of security that a boy possesses under the roof-tree of his father's house !

And hour after hour he walked, in enforced idleness, as he was too long doomed to do, the streets of London, in the mere act of volition, seeking to leave thought, even reflection, yea, and the world itself, behind him ; but thought, reflection, and care came after him in all their strength, and would *not* be left behind.

The sole joy that broke this monotony was an occasional letter from Gerard, who seemed, in the full flush of his first foreign travel, disposed to loiter by the way at Rotterdam and elsewhere ; but as day followed day, Julian grew heartsick of idleness, and the awful solitude of being *alone* in London, till one day his flagging spirits received a fillip after an advertisement caught his eye.

"Here is the very thing for me," thought he; "but of course there will be ten thousand replies to it."

"*Wanted*, a gentleman—young preferred—with from £50 to £100, to take a share in a most lucrative and gentlemanly business. Apply, Messrs. Hookitt and Pawsey," &c.

"By Jove! I'll try this. Never venture, never win!"

Writing, he received an immediate reply to call on Messrs. Hookitt and Co.

He put the notes in his pocket-book, and full of hope, though his funds were waxing low indeed, set out at once in search of the given address, fearful only that he might be anticipated by others, and full of hope that he should ere long be able to give Gerard a brilliant account of his success. But in what, he knew not.

To seek the source of the advertisement, Julian had to penetrate into a region to him before unknown. A district consecrated, apparently, more peculiarly than any other, to moneymaking and the worship of the Golden Calf, but not far from London Bridge. Into that vortex which draws together men of

every nation and creed, and those who have neither creed nor nation, nor any instinct save money-worship.

He had to thread his way through a labyrinth of back slums, narrow streets where the sunlight never came to absorb the mud, between gigantic piles of dingy and hideous-looking stores, where, slung in air, bales went up and barrels came down, amid the rattle of chains, the squeak of blocks and pulleys ; and where great lumbering draymen swore and chaffed, chaffed and swore, by turns ; and he thought with Cowper that truly

“ God made the country and man made the town.”

At last he reached a dingy little office, the whole frontage of which was occupied by a small window and smaller door, on the jamb of which appeared the name of the firm, “ Hookitt and Pawsey ;” and he entered with a beating heart, and in no way crushed by the mean and meagre aspect of the place, for he had learnt enough of London life to know that the aspect or size of an office, was no criterion of the amount of business transacted there, or the money made.

Several old ledgers lay on an ink-spotted desk ; two stools stood thereby ; but there were no clerks ; they were evidently out on business, for their pens lay by their ink-horn ; but a voice from an inner den called, " Come in." So, hat in hand, Julian entered, to find himself received by a sleek-looking, well-fed, well-dressed and pleasantly-mannered man, with a somewhat aquiline cast of features, thick, dark, well-oiled hair, a thick, dark beard, keen eyes, and a rubicund visage. He seemed about thirty years of age, wore a species of very dark green cut-away coat, a crimson necktie, and displayed at his vest some handsome jewellery. All these details Julian was enabled to take in at leisure, as on his entrance this personage half wheeled round the old tattered easy-chair in which he sat, and said, with a wave of the hand,

" One moment, my dear sir. Excuse me, but I am just glancing at the money article in the *Times*. Ah, ah ! daresay you'll be glad to hear that the markets are firm, sir—firm."

Then, as if by force of habit, he winked ; Julian knew not why. The latter, bowing, said :

"A fine morning, sir."

"A novel and original remark," replied the other; "but it is a fine morning."

"I called with reference to your advertisement," began Julian, in a hesitating manner, and colouring very much as he spoke.

"Glad to see you, young man," exclaimed the other, extending a thick, coarse hand, on which were several great rings of very Balarat aspect. "Mr. Melville?" Julian bowed. "I am Mr. Hookitt. Now then, what do *you* want?" he suddenly demanded of a flashy-looking young fellow who looked in.

"Instructions, Mr. Hookitt, please."

"I shall expect you at the head-office tomorrow; there our manager will give you some idea of the delivery book, petty cash, and all that sort of thing."

"Thank you, sir," replied the youth, and passed through the outer office with his forefinger at the side of his nose.

"And now to business, my dear sir," said Mr. Hookitt, removing his hat, which hitherto he had been wearing, and considerably over the right eye. "You can give us references, of course?"

Julian hesitated and coloured painfully. His only friend in London, Mr. Algernon Spangles, would scarcely do ; so he said,

“ I am a stranger in London, but I can give you that which is better than a reference—the money required.”

“ We are general merchants and shippers,” said Mr. Hookitt, as a little smile rippled over his rather shiny face. “ Small place this, as yet ; our private office ; but our chief establishment is within a few minutes’ walk of London Bridge. My partner, Mr. Pawsey—Aminadab Pawsey—is a well-known member of the Society of Friends ; but you have heard of him, I presume ? ”

Julian had not the pleasure.

“ Supposed to be the next Lord Mayor. Great man, Pawsey, and most charitable, though he complains that everybody in the world is too fond of credit. His son, Jonadab Pawsey, is our chief agent and collector—pockets a salary of seven hundred a year. Should prefer *you*, sir, for that office : good appearance, gentlemanly manner ; hope to see you in it when Jonadab is promoted. Oh, who knows ? ”

"You are very kind."

"Not at all—not at all," replied Mr. Hookitt; running his pudgy fingers through his well-oiled locks; "you Scotsmen always succeed in London, as everywhere else—national honesty, thrift, perseverance, strict spirit of honour, and all that sort of thing. Any way, we shall be glad of, say £100 from you as a guarantee for it all," added Mr. Hookitt, laughing, and trying to untie the wire of a champagne flask; "and you shall get a liberal percentage thereon, in addition to your salary—say forty pounds to start with, and fifty next year. These terms we should increase, of course, if you could chuck in another hundred."

Julian shook his head, and his spirit sank at the proffered salary; but then, on the other hand, he had heard of great premiums required, and long service given gratis.

"We speculate boldly, my dear sir, dear boy, let me call you," continued Mr. Hookitt, as he handed a tumbler of the sparkling wine to Julian, and filled another for himself; "I am old enough to be your father, you know."

"Not quite, Mr. Hookitt."

"Ah, you flatter me."

"No, no—thanks," said Julian, as his glass was refilled.

"Well, I am on the wrong side of thirty, and have seen a deal of life in the world—and out of it."

(He had, indeed, enjoyed some years of industrious seclusion.)

"Oh, you Scotsmen, you Scotsmen, are knowing fellows! but, as I said before, we speculate boldly—too boldly, perhaps, for your taste; but we have quick returns and make heaps of money; a little time and we may literally *coin* it." And he laughed heartily as he spoke.

But it never occurred to Julian, in his profound ignorance of such matters, that his hundred pounds, in such a vast commercial concern as that of Messrs Hookitt and Pawsey, must be but as a drop in the river Thames.

"Latin and Greek, of course, you Scotsmen, even your parish schoolboys, pick up," resumed Mr. Hookitt, who seemed to have time enough to dwell on indifferent matters; "but they are all rubbish in the City; *figures* stand

at A 1 with Hookitt and Pawsey, as well as at Lloyd's."

It is strange that his rather fulsome manner did not strike Julian ; but manner is a pleasant thing, and he felt actually flattered.

" The romance of life don't appertain much to us, sir," said Mr. Hookitt, sighing, as he imbibed another sparkling beaker. " I have discovered that, after years passed at the cold, stern, and monotonous ledger ; but they made me the man I am, sir—the man I am ! "

Some dry sherry and a biscuit were now produced, and, after much friendly hilarity, Julian handed over his hundred pounds in notes, receiving a receipt therefor in the names of " Hookitt and Pawsey," but not on the official paper of the firm, as that was all up at the head office, or had been expended at the branch wherein he was then seated ; and the giver begged him to be particularly careful of it as his voucher, and Julian placed the packet containing it away in the depths of his breast-pocket.

" And is it coming to this ? " he thought, despite the sherry, which had rendered his brain a little cloudy, as he looked through

the dirty panes of the window into a small yard beyond, where lay an old rotten cask, some empty bottles, and wet straw, on which a bloated rat was nestling; "after all my wild and high aspirations, after—after I scarcely know what? To spend the hours of each long, long day in the firm of Hookitt and Pawsey over the chest-aching desk, amid the roar and bustle of this great hotbed of splendour and squalor, wealth and starvation!"

Julian had most hazy ideas of the work to be done, or what was expected of him, in sharing "the lucrative and gentlemanly business;" but the senior partner seemed a pleasant fellow, and he could but put his trust in Providence and hope for the best.

" 'Procrastination is the thief of time,' as the copybooks have it," resumed Mr. Hookitt, after another glass of sherry, "and time is money, sir; time wasted is never regained. You must, of course, keep up to the scratch, Mr. Melville, with Hookitt and Pawsey."

"I shall do my utmost, sir."

"That is right; another glass of sherry. And you couldn't throw in another fifty?"

"Impossible."

"Well, you'll never regret having a stool in our house. Business has made many an English gentleman, sir, before and after the time of Dick Whittington and Sir Thomas Gresham. Figures for a man who wants to get on in this world—thought, calculation, energy—all the special virtues of your countrymen, sir."

Julian bowed.

"And now, sir," said Mr. Hookitt, as his visitor assumed his hat, gloves, and umbrella, "when you are a little time in our establishment, you must allow me to put your name up as a future member of our club."

"With pleasure, if I can afford it."

"Afford it! my dear sir; of course you will be able to afford it by that time. A pleasant social community it is."

"And how named?"

"The 'Wide-awake Club,'" he replied, with a loud laugh.

"A thousand thanks."

"Don't oversleep yourself, my dear Mr. Melville, but come to business betimes; nine sharp, to-morrow morning;" and with an

impressive shake of the hand—a veritable wring thereof—Mr. Hookitt permitted Julian to take his departure.

Julian thought deeply over the past interview as he walked homeward by Fleet Street. It was a depressing prospect, compared with his earlier hopes and anticipations, to spend all the best of his years in a gloomy counting-house; yet it seemed to be the fate of thousands who were jolly enough over it; and as to his hopes of ever being Lord Hermitage, they had utterly faded out or been forgotten after the departure of Gerard.

“Well, well, I shall no doubt be rich and a partner some day yet, God help me,” thought Julian, “and now, is not anything—anything better than the heartless, hopeless life of painful and aching uncertainty I have been leading of late?”

Mr. Hookitt was not exactly the *beau ideal* of a gentleman; but he seemed a good sort of fellow, and so inclined to praise Scotsmen. What did he mean?

“He is a right good fellow, any way, and I am in luck!” thought Julian; and full of this conviction, that he might be fresh for

business in the morning, he went to bed betimes.

He would write to Gerard of his good fortune—at least, of the new vista which had been so suddenly opened up to him; and he lay nearly the whole night awake, full of happy imaginings, of brilliant thoughts, of an easy and perhaps wealthy, if inglorious, future—waking dreams that were never to be realised.

We think we need scarcely inform the reader of the crushing sequel. At the address given him, near London Bridge, no such persons as Hookitt and Pawsey had ever been heard of, and on seeking the “branch office,” which had been the scene of his interview on the preceding day, he found the shutters up, the little doorway closed, and both covered by the undisturbed posters of the bill-sticker over night; and then the conviction came home to him that he had been swindled, and his hundred pounds, more than the half of all he possessed in the world, were gone for ever!

Two or three other young men, whom he met examining the silent premises and making

similar inquiries, had all been "done" in the same fashion, but at different hours, and they were loud in denouncing Hookitt, and in wishing Julian to join them in an application to the police; but he turned away in disgust, a wiser man than he was yesterday.

He now saw what a prodigious fool he had been to suppose that his hundred pounds, though a vast sum to him, could have been any object to a firm whose junior partner was supposed to be the next Lord Mayor! Hookitt must have thought him, and found him, the most simple of all simple gudgeons: so Julian came to the conclusion that though the pill he had swallowed, and the experience won, were both bitter, he had better commit the whole affair to oblivion; but the loss he had suffered added greatly and rapidly to the desperation of his circumstances.

Yet, for a time, in his gloomy lodgings, he could not help brooding over the affair, while emotions of alarm, agitation, passion, and a natural desire for vengeance, swayed him by turns.

Had Mr. Algernon Spangles been at hand to advise him, the whole affair would, no

doubt, never have happened; but that individual had fallen into arrears of rent, or made an engagement in the provinces—any way, he had dropped for the time out of Julian's orbit.

But the disgusts of the latter were not yet over.

"Robbed though I have been," thought he, "I shall have to avail myself of a few pounds ere long from Gerard's two hundred, now due—I know the dear fellow would give me the whole sum if I required it."

And so, as the six months had now more than expired, in confidence, and full of love for his brother, and gratitude for what that brother's talents must have won them both, he took with him the letter of Gerard, and repaired to the publisher, concerning the sale of the novel.

The bibliopole was engaged, of course, but Julian saw his manager, rather a snappish party.

The state of sale *had* been made up, but as the required number of copies given in the duplicate memorandum had *not* been sold, so far from having anything to pay, the firm

had been greatly out of pocket by the whole unfortunate transaction.

"After all those brilliant and favourable reviews!" exclaimed Julian, positively aghast.

"Those," replied the manager, laughing at his bewilderment, "too often have nothing whatever to do with the success of, or monetary return for, a book; and so far as reviews go, there are a great many wheels within each other in that matter."

"Surely there has been some mistake!" exclaimed Julian, hotly.

"A great mistake, indeed."

"How?"

"On our part, in publishing the work of an unknown author. Good morning, my dear sir."

And Julian, politely bowed out, found himself again traversing the sunny streets, with a wiser head, but a heavier heart.

CHAPTER II.

TRIALS AND STRUGGLES.

IN its very monotony, time passed quickly with Julian. He had now seen London—the vast metropolis—the capital of Europe—under all its phases, and in the gloom of his heart and of his circumstances, we fear that he was beginning to loathe it, and to wish to leave it ; but for where ?

He had seen it in the early days of spring, when snow and sleet make cold and desolation everywhere ; he had seen it, outwardly at least, amid the bustle and crowd of “ the season,” when the streets, the parks, and the Row are in all their glory ; he had seen it in the utter emptiness of July and August, when white dust powders every shrub and tree ; and anon in winter, when the vast thoroughfares were slippery with ice, or were alternately deep with snow and mud—mud and snow—till the sloppiness became dark and thick, and greasy

as treacle ; while overhead, and even against one's face, was the dense fog yellow as pea-soup, rendering mid-day dark, and respiration well-nigh impossible. And amid all these changes, he had ever one futile longing to be back again among the grassy glens, the breezy hills, and clear trouting streams of his home ; and never was this feeling stronger than when he found himself wandering alone, by night, in the abandoned streets, which, in their mightiness, looked doubly desolate with their long lines of glimmering gas-lamps.

Doubtless he viewed everything through a false and distorted medium ; the shadow of the past often fell across the present, rendering the latter gloomier still, when Julian indulged in the dark dreamland of reverie.

Julian spent his little store not very wisely, even after the two tricks that had been practised upon him and Gerard. Honourable, simple, and kind-hearted, he was easily imposed upon by the cunning and the simulated sorrows of the apparently unfortunate ; and as his funds ebbed, to practise economy he had to take a cheaper room in the boarding-house, ascending from floor to floor, till he was under

the very tiles at last, and the fancied brightness of his future was fast fading out.

On the strength—small though it was—of his grandfather's name and services, Julian waited on certain Scottish peers and Members of Parliament, leaving cards for them again and again (he had speculated in a hundred, including the plate, for a few shillings), in the vague hope that they might kindly do "something" for him. But in this profitless pilgrimage he only wasted much time and shoe-leather, and encountered many bitter mortifications. Each and all seemed as inaccessible as the Emperor of China, and he was often compelled to wait long in stately lobbies and draughty corridors by scrutinising "flunkies," who superciliously inquired his business, or told him, in the same tone, that he must communicate it in writing, till he abandoned the task in utter disgust and bitterness of heart, and thought how different it would all be could he have announced himself to these powdered and pampered valets as "the Lord Hermitage," and held that position, the dream of achieving which had so unaccountably lured Gerard away to Germany.

But about this time chance threw Julian in the way of two "noble" friends, who nearly proved his destruction, or at least disgrace, by the snare they prepared for him.

Lingering one evening in the Burlington Arcade during a shower, he was suddenly accosted by a fashionable-looking young fellow who had passed him two or three times, while promenading to and fro, watching the lighting up of the tiny shops on either hand, filled with pretty trifles.

"Can you oblige me with a cigar-light?" said the stranger.

"With pleasure," replied Julian.

"Ah—thanks—a countryman of mine, I think," said the other, lighting the cigar that protruded from a handsome and well-trimmed moustache.

"Perhaps so," replied Julian; "but I should not think so from your accent."

"Ah—but I know it from *yours*. Now, what part of Scotland do you come from?" he asked, in an insinuating tone.

"Ettrick."

"Hettrick—never heard of it before."

"That is singular—it is a great and well-known district in the south country."

"Ah—my property lies chiefly in Ayrshire—I daresay you've heard of me—Lord Carmylie?"

Julian never *had* heard of the title; but certainly it had a Scottish sound about it, so he bowed and lifted his hat, and was about to pass, when his lordship said:

"Don't be in a hurry; the shower is not yet over."

So Julian remained, and at that moment a little "tiger," sprucely and perfectly dressed, with cockade and waist-belt, came up with some message from "Lady Carmylie," and giving his master what seemed to Julian rather a palpable wink, passed out of the arcade.

"A saucy young dog that," said Lord Carmylie; "but you can have no idea how London spoils all that class. Have you been long in town?" he added, with friendly interest.

This lured Julian into saying more of himself than he was in the habit of admitting to strangers, and he hinted that he was in search of some appointment.

"Such a thing is difficult to get," said his lordship, with a pleasant smile ; "but nothing can be got without a trial, and the perseverance of you—I mean of *we*—Scotsmen is proverbial. May I ask your name ? "

"Melville—Julian Melville."

"Ah, here comes my friend, Lord Campbell—Campbell, Mr. Melville, a countryman of ours."

"Glad to meet you, sir—hope you are tidy," said the new comer, who was by no means so *distingué* in appearance as Lord Carmylie, but had very much the air and aspect of a groom out of livery ; he was coarse-featured, closely shaven, wore his hat well down over his brow, and kept his eyes keenly fixed upon Julian, while solacing himself by sucking a twig.

"We are just going to have a glass of wine—will you join us, Mr. Melville ? " asked Lord Carmylie.

"Just a glass of fizz," added Lord Campbell.

"Thanks," replied Julian, giving an angry glance at the gate-keeper, who had been scrutinising him and his two new acquaint-

ances with what seemed a very decided air of impertinence, and they walked forth together.

“How lucky!” thought Julian; “here is a young Scottish noble, certainly not much older than myself, who seems a friendly kind of fellow, without a bit of titled snobbery about him, and who may be able to serve me in some fashion, thank heaven!”

“Which way?” asked the peer.

“Oh—the old bunk, of course,” replied Lord Campbell, dropping his twig as he laughed aloud, and in another minute Julian found himself seated in the long and stately dining-room of a very handsome restaurant.

After the more than faded gentility—the squalor—of the boarding-house near the river, the aspect of this great apartment, with its gilded cornices, crystal gasaliers, marble tables with bronze pedestals, whereat gentlemen and ladies, some of the latter without bonnets, were lunching or dining on every delicacy, the soft carpets, the gentlemanly waiters gliding noiselessly about, napkin on arm, the popping of champagne corks, the hum of well-bred and modulated voices, with occasional little rings

of laughter, made up to Julian's eyes and ears a delightful whole, and amid many pleasant commonplaces and references to certain improvements then in progress on the estates of Carmylie, a bottle of sparkling Moselle was speedily imbibed by the trio.

"Well, Campbell," said the peer, after a pause, "how is the Dook?"

"The Dook is as hearty as a buck, though I don't think he can jump so high—have another bottle of cham, my lord."

"Thanks, yaas—just one, though, really."

Julian certainly thought "Lord Campbell's" general style and appearance rather strange, and he became very uncomfortable when there was a proposal to adjourn to the next room, where they might have "a little mild play," or have a shy at pool and pyramid.

Remembering the state of his exchequer, Julian was not ashamed, with men of their rank, to decline frankly, adding that he "never played;" an announcement which caused the two noblemen to exchange furtive smiles, and elevate their eyebrows. Julian detected this; he feared that perhaps he had committed a mistake, or a solecism, and coloured deeply,

while his vague sense of discomfort increased : but on more wine being proposed, he begged to be excused, and rose to withdraw.

"Going already!" exclaimed Lord Carmylie, "and before we have exchanged cards."

"I must leave, my lord," said he, pleadingly.

"Well—ere you go do me the favour to get this note exchanged at the bar, while I go over my betting-book with Campbell," said the peer, giving a bank-note to Julian, who bowed, and took it mechanically.

"It is a ten-pounder," said my Lord Campbell.

Julian, as he passed through the room, saw that it was a ten-pound note; but his quick eye—all ignorant as he was of such matters—saw more; that it was on the "Bank of Elegance," not England. He paused, grew pale with astonishment and honest indignation on finding that he had been deceived by a couple of sharpers, who must have taken him for a simpleton indeed.

Returning to them at once, he threw the note on the table.

"Hullo, what's the row?" asked Lord

Carmylie, looking up from his betting-book ;
“ if anything is wrong, keep it dark.”

“ Ain’t you going to get the flimsy changed ? ” added Lord Campbell, with sulky surprise.

“ I shall leave that to your lordships,” replied Julian ; “ and be thankful,” he added, in a voice loud enough to be heard nearly all over the room, “ that I do not hand you and your note over to the police ! ”

He put on his hat, grasped his cane defiantly, and instantly quitted the place ; but not quick enough to avoid hearing a sudden roar and a scuffle behind him, and to see the two noble friends brought forth in the hands of the police, who had been tracking them. He hurried away from the locality as fast as he could ; and still faster would he have gone had he known what was to be stated in the prints of the following day, with reference to a row in a restaurant, and arrest of two well-known swindlers—that a *third* had been seen with them, for whom “ the police were now actively in search ! ”

Though this is a phrase in general use with reference to such, and to much more serious

affairs, it sounded to poor Julian like a dreadful note of alarm, and thus for days he avoided the locality where he had met the so-called lords, and, indeed, the whole of the West-end, dreading arrest for complicity with whom, or what, he knew not.

A constant source of anxiety to Julian was the brevity and scarcity of Gerard's letters. His mind seemed strangely pre-occupied, but with what? Had he fallen in love with some fair-skinned and blue-eyed *fräulein*, all unlike the dark Salome of his novel? Julian feared it, his letters were so short, so strangely expressed, and so dreamy.

He was compelled to let Gerard know of how he had been bubbled by Mr. Hookitt and the bookseller, but said nothing of other disappointments, and the too probable approach of want, lest such a narrative should cause his affectionate brother sorrow and distress.

"I have left my old life behind me and for ever, dear Gerard," wrote Julian; "will any sunshine or brightness ever come into the new? I often think this hopeless existence cannot last forever; it is a long lane that has no turning, you would say, but many must have

gone through, and many may be now undergoing, the same trials that now are mine. Last night I dreamt we were at home in Ettrick, where the vault of heaven is blue, indeed, by day, bluer still by night; where the unshorn stars come out in their northern glory; where the woods rustle their foliage pleasantly in the breeze, and the birds are carolling aloft. We were fishing, I thought, in the Dowie Dens of the Yarrow, where the alder and the larch trees dip their branches in the stream, and Kate came smiling to join us. A tumult of joy filled my heart; all that has passed since those days seemed then a *dream*, within a dream: but I awoke to reality, to life, to the horror of a squalid London lodging-house, where everything seemed strange and foreign to my eye, so faded and sordid that I thought I should have died, and, but for the thought of you, only wished to do so."

Julian sometimes regretted the enforced melancholy tone of his letters, and had doubts if they always reached Gerard, whose answers were so few and far between; but, sooth to say, his own motions were so various and so errant now, and the abodes to which he was

compelled to resort so obscure, that they could only correspond with growing difficulties; for with the luckless Julian, "the Lord Hermitage" of his brother's enthusiastic hopes, even the grim farce of shabby gentility was fast being played out now!

He had already known what it was to take a promenade in lieu of a dinner, and go without a fire in his tiny grate during the cold weather on the plea that his room was already too warm, though his teeth chattered as he said so to the astonished smut-faced servant-of-all-work; and his diminished wardrobe became so threadbare and worn, that when, by mere force of habit, he ventured westward into the parks or the Row, where the spoiled children of wealth, fashion, and folly were driving or riding past in thousands, he became painfully conscious that the constables on duty kept their eyes upon him, he seemed so homeless and aimless.

One day he suddenly found himself close to a magnificent barouche in the park, and the familiar arms on the panels, or a bend *azure*, a star between two crescents, the coronet and the supporters, two maidens in antique habits,

gave him a species of electric shock, and he sprang back ; but two brilliantly fair faces in the vehicle met his eye : Kate in all her beauty, and another lovely girl, Amy Kerr of Kershope, a blonde of the most attractive type, who half started from her seat and exclaimed :

“ Kate, Kate ! Good heavens ! there is Julian Melville, or his spectre rather ! ”

He heard the excited girl’s voice, and turning, mingled with the crowd beyond the rails, and almost fled from the spot, resolving never to venture there again, while fierce anger came into his heart.

“ My father—my father ! ” thought Julian, as he leant breathlessly and faint against a tree ; “ oh, must I curse and hate him for ever ? No, no ; nothing lasts for ever, here at least, thank God ! ”

He was faint from want of food, and all the Row seemed to be whirling round him ; yet into his pale face there came the haughty and dark Deloraine expression, and the Deloraine blood, that he dared not claim, came bubbling up in his veins.

Amid the whirl of life through which Kate,

as a Countess, was now passing—a succession of London seasons, varied by gay circles of friends at Deloraine and elsewhere ; presentations at Court, drums and drawing-rooms, pleasures and honours, the pale and ghastly face of Julian Melville, as she saw it for an instant in the Row, cost her a terrible pang. She knew that she had wronged him terribly and sadly, but had hoped he would get over it, he was so young ; yet she little knew, in wronging him, whose place she had taken, and how much more sadly and terribly he was wronged by the Earl, her husband, and that the latter, if he ever thought of his existence, only did so with a species of resentment and rancour that was implacable, and somewhat resembling that which Dr. Johnson describes the infamous Anne, Countess of Macclesfield, cherishing towards her son, the luckless Richard Savage.

By the time his last stage of misery was reached, Julian had begun to contemplate the chances of his becoming an inmate of one of those dreadful courts or pestilential alleys that lie in the vicinity of Holborn—where the concentrated squalor and destitution of the

English capital may be seen in full force; or, worse still, if possible, those horrible abodes of profligacy, villainy, intoxication, and hydra-headed vice, near St. Clement Danes or Chancery Lane. The anticipation of such a fate filled him with horror, and he thought he would rather anticipate it under the quiet, muddy flow of the river.

But there was the absent Gerard; could he leave him alone in the world?

He often endured these heavy fits of depression, which are so maddening, especially to those who, like himself, are utterly friendless; and once, when his last coin had gone, and he was contemplating the still flow of the river, gliding past in the long rippling lines of gas-light, he was impressed, as if by a sentence of death, on hearing one wayfarer say to another:

“Yes—yes—poor devils whose lives are hopeless are indeed better out of this world than in it.”

“Hopeless, indeed, is mine!” muttered Julian, as he bent his haggard eyes and desperate thoughts upon the refuge before him. It was to take one headlong plunge, and all would be over!

And then, as there flashed upon his memory all the cases of nameless and unknown suicides he had heard of, there came something slowly floating past, alternately lost to sight and seen again in the long lines of misty radiance that crossed the river. Anon it was almost below his eyes, and he shuddered as, amid the ooze, a drowned corpse went past—a corpse that doubtless would never reach the sea.

It fascinated his eyes, till it rose, and then sank finally, to all appearance, amid the eddies caused by a huge dredging machine, that was splashing close by with its mud-laden chain of iron buckets, and casting weird gleams from its engine lights upon the seething water. Then Julian turned and literally fled from the spot.

That night, an autumn one, he actually slept under a tree in Hyde Park, but long before sleep closed his eyes he lay watching the lighted windows of a stately mansion, past which the shadowy figures of the dancers flitted, and from whence came the strains of music, amid the incessant roll of arriving and departing carriages ; and while he gazed and

listened, till weariness and want overcame him, he knew not that he was looking at the town residence of the Earl of Deloraine.

Roused betimes by a surly park-keeper, he resumed his aimless wandering, and hourly felt more than ever convinced that this dull and heartless vagabondising could not last much longer. It should not lead him to crime, but assuredly it might lead him to death!

Wandering on, he knew not, cared not, whither—aware only that pride would neither abate nor in any way satisfy the cravings of hunger—a man ran against him.

“I beg your pardon,” said Julian, faintly.

“I beg yours! Hullo—by Jove—but you do seem down on your luck!” exclaimed the other.

“Spangles!”

“Spangles it is—Algernon Spangles; but, as usual, at very low water.”

It was evident that the happy-go-lucky actor was in somewhat dilapidated circumstances, as the state of his attire indicated, yet it was princely as compared with that of Julian, who in a few words told him his miserable story.

The eyes of the light comedian grew moist, for he had all the generosity which is a characteristic of his profession. Drawing off a wofully worn and tattered kid glove, he thrust a hand far down into the pocket of his rather frayed trousers, saying, in the words of the player :

“ ‘ Come forth, you blackguard—evasion is useless ! Here is the last sovereign that reigns in my dominions ; but you are welcome to the half of it, Melville.’ ”

Julian protested against this. He saw that Spangles was in low funds ; his tightly buttoned surtout, with buttons incomplete, his frayed and turned paper collar and napless hat, showed this, though his bearing was jaunty, pleasant, and gentlemanly as ever.

“ Nonsense ! ” exclaimed the actor. “ I borrowed from you often enough when you had it to lend ; oblige me now by borrowing from me, when *I* have it to lend.”

“ I know not how, or when, I may be able to return even this accommodation,” said Julian, with a very full heart.

“ It won’t matter if you never return it at all ; and if not to me, lend it to some other

poor devil, and tell him to send it on, and perhaps it may come back to me in time. So, so—you cannot work, and to beg you are ashamed.”

“Nay, nay, far from it, if I got aught to work at, that I was able to do.”

“Try the stage; ‘All the world’s a stage,’ etcetera.”

“I am unfit for it.”

“Not in appearance, certainly.”

“In talent then,” said Julian, meekly.

“There is not much talent wanted in the super line; at least, to fight at Bosworth, and march to Dunsinane. Look me up at the stage door; there is an early call to-day, and I must be off like a bird—so ta-ta, old fellow.”

“To fight!” thought Julian, as his friend left him, and he turned away in search of food, feeling more than ever humiliated and crest-fallen. “Yes—I shall fight; but not as a puppet on the mimic stage of war,” he added aloud, as an old idea occurred to him.

Often, when rambling in the vicinity of Westminster, had the placards and beer-shop harangues of the Sergeant Kites who affect

that locality attracted keenly his consideration, and occasioned him much thought, as he rambled by night along the stately streets, with ever and anon the solemn boom of Big Ben in his ears; and now these thoughts took tangible form.

“The future—the future!” he muttered aloud, for he was always so much alone that he was apt now to commune with himself; “what would life, even in age, be without it? The present, with all its joys and prosperity, or its bitterness and humiliation, we know; but the future, the chief inheritance of the ardent and the luckless, is so full of the uncertain, and always inspires hope. To become a soldier for good!” he added, as his pale cheek coloured; “it was not in this spirit, or in this mood of desperation, my forefathers drew their swords, but needs must now. I shall cease to be my own master; I shall never be able to go to poor Gerard, but he may come to me, wherever I am; and who can foresee, save One, when or how my career is to *end*!”

And in this mood he resolutely bent his steps towards Westminster.

CHAPTER III.

GERARD MEETS WITH AN ENIGMA.

MEANWHILE, and before fortune had reached its gloomiest point with Julian, how was it faring with Gerard on that mission which he had undertaken, inspired and impelled by the vague desire of doing something for their mother's honour, and the assertion of his brother's true position in the world.

At Harwich he had taken the steamer for Rotterdam, and as she steamed out past the Bell Buoy he had seen the last rays of the set sun fade redly out on Landguard Fort, and lastly on the great martello tower, the largest in England, that crowns the cliff above the town ; and when at twelve miles distance the harbour lights died out, he felt that he had fairly bade good-bye to home, and the novelty of travel filled his mind—youthful, dreamy, and elastic—with emotions of happiness

and pleasure, though the ardour of these were soon to be somewhat marred by the heavy rolling of the ship.

Hence, as Gerard was no sailor, he felt supreme satisfaction when, with early morning, he found her ploughing the yellow, muddy waters of the Maese, and he was informed that the coast of Holland was on both sides ; for some time he looked in vain for the said coast, till on mounting the bridge he saw some fringes of pale green willows, rising, as it appeared, directly out of the water. Anon some windmills and church spires, but all seeming at a vast distance, began to appear, and Gerard beheld with a mountaineer's eye, and with growing bewilderment, the wondrous flatness of the land, which in some places seemed to be lower than the sea ; yet these were the famous "Lowlands o' Holland," the theme of many a Scottish military song of love and exile.

The low sandy bank that runs like a spit into the sea, the Hoek van Holland, on the left hand, was left far astern ; the town of Brielle, on the right bank, was soon passed, and by that time Gerard found the steamer

suddenly in possession of the Dutch Customs officers, swarthy, bearded, and rough-looking fellows in blue military uniform, and in due time the vessel, after running twenty miles up the river, ran close along the Boompjes, as a stately row of houses that face the Maese are named from their bordering row of now giant elm-trees.

All the bustle of a great quay adjoining a railway station was there—a roar of most conflicting sounds; laden porters jostling, seamen shouting, vehicles of every description skurrying or lumbering to and fro; bales of goods from, or bound for, every part of the world; myriads of casks and boxes to be taken into, or just taken out of, the *Lieue*, *Oude*, and *Nieuwe havens*, which open into each other; the strange-looking city of red fantastic brick houses, that seemed to consist of as many canals as streets; the singular conglomeration of trees and ships, hedges and water—water everywhere—with the square cathedral spire towering over all: and there Gerard Melville found himself standing by the Boompjes, with a portmanteau in his hand, most painfully conscious that he was a stranger.

and a very bewildered one, rather unsteady afoot too, as he seemed still to feel the roll of the ship.

"*Hotel des Pays Bas, Mynheer,*" said a hoarse voice in his ear, as a porter confronted him and pointed to a great edifice on the Quai near the steamer.

"*Hotel-scheppershuis, Spaanesche Kade!*" bellowed a second, with one hand at his brass-bound cap and the other resolutely on Gerard's portmanteau, and so energetic was this personage that he felt bound to accompany him, having somehow an idea that the caravansari last named would be the most inexpensive of the two.

If Gerard had felt lonely in London, he felt lonelier still in Rotterdam, for he was without the society of Julian, and the language of the people sounded harsh and barbarous, yet they were polite, kind, and hospitable. He soon felt himself thus "at home," as it were, but resolved, after seeing all that was worth seeing in the city, to push on for Wiesbaden.

But as he sat at breakfast in the recess of a great latticed window, gazing on the view without, he had that dull and vague sense of

the unreality of all he looked on, an emotion consequent on the rapidity of steam travel now. At the same hour yesterday he had been with Julian in their dull lodging between Fleet Street and the Thames; now he was looking out on a Dutch thoroughfare, of the days of De Witt and Cortenaer, with gables facing the street, and overhanging their foundations by many a foot; where carts ran on sledges, not wheels; where the peasants clattered about in sabots, and the women wore huge coifs and ram's-horn shaped earrings; where the brass milk-pails shone like burnished gold, and a fantastic looking little reflecting mirror was placed before the windows of every house, and where water and water-craft, the masts and yards of shipping, met the eye at every turn, as if the whole city were half orchard and half dockyard.

He longed for a companion with whom he might exchange his thoughts, as he set forth to see the city; but ere long his thoughts were fated to have a companion of whom he had as little knowledge as the power that her idea—for at first it was a mere *idea*—was to have over him and his actions.

He rapidly "did" all the lions of Rotterdam; the great cathedral, with its monuments covered with epitaphs in old Dutch verse, and with coats-of-arms mutilated by the French; the Scotch church on the Schotche Dyk, and the stern of the *Royal Charles*, cut out of the Medway by the Dutch in 1667; the Cabinet of Curiosities; and after partaking of schiedam in the house where Erasmus first saw the light, there remained nothing more to examine or to interest him, after he had visited the Academy of Science, where he saw an object which filled him with an interest that was fated to deepen and increase ere many hours were over his head.

In an ill-lighted room of the Academy he suddenly came upon the portrait of a woman that riveted his attention in a singular degree. It was a full-length of a lady, tall and slender, yet round and shapely, with a face of sad and weird, yet exquisite beauty, with a wondrous wealth of blue-black hair, streaming backward, as if borne by a soft breeze. Her eyes, dark as night, sparkled with an expression full of power in their well-like depths. Her features were bold

yet soft, her straight nose blending into the low, classic brow, over which the parted hair formed a sharp downward peak. The eyebrows were dark and strongly defined, and the eyes looked as if no impure thought had ever occurred to their owner.

She had but one blemish, a tiny black mole in a dimple on the left side of her firm, full-lipped mouth.

Among the inartistic and certainly most unpoetical Dutch, it was an object of less interest and less appreciated than the representation of a newly-slaughtered pig by Snyders, or any collection of still-life, carrots, and turnips by De Heem, or a Teniers representing hideous boors drinking and dancing as people can only dance in sabots ; thus it perhaps attracted usually but little attention in the dusky corner to which it is no doubt yet consigned.

To the fascinated fancy of Gerard Melville it was not a picture that seemed to be in the room, but almost a living being ; and, what impressed him more, she seemed the embodiment of all his fancy had dreamt of in Salome, the dark-haired heroine of his

novel, even to the little mole, like a kissing-patch, close to her lovely mouth.

He turned to the number in his catalogue :
“ Titian—died 1576.” Further information there was none.

“ Nearly three hundred years ago must all this wondrous beauty have passed away and mingled with the dust ! ” he thought sadly, as he turned to go, and yet returned again and again to gaze on the picture, till at last he forced himself into the sunny streets, where still its pale beauty and its haunting eyes seemed to follow him, and to come between him and other thoughts—between him and all he looked on, even amid the gaiety of the Tivoli Gardens, where he wiled away the evening in the suburbs—places not unlike the old-fashioned tea-gardens in England, but frequented by the highest class of citizens, and where there are ball and billiard rooms, music, and, of course, smoking *ad libitum*.

That night he dreamt of the picture, and awoke with a start, and thought to attribute it to his surroundings, rather than the work of Titian. His room, a great old-fashioned

one, with wainscot panels, was eminently one for a fanciful person to feel uncomfortable in, though the fire in the iron stove burned cheerily; there were rustling sounds, rats it might be, heard within the walls, and the eyes of the pictures thereon—old burgomaster-looking personages in thick ruffs—seemed to watch him with the “eyes of the dead, ghastly, desolate, and dread;” and there were uncertain shadows out of which he expected something weird momentarily to start.

“Am I becoming weak in intellect, silly, or what, to permit a picture—mere perishable oil and canvas—to haunt me thus?” thought Gerard; so he resolved to leave Rotterdam far behind him on the morrow; but, as the morrow proved to be Sunday, and he missed the early train for Cologne, he could not get one till three in the afternoon, as Sunday among the Presbyterians in Holland is not unlike the same day as held by those north of the Tweed.

Slowly passed the day in a stillness broken only by the monotonous tolling of bells, till the time came when Gerard, now fretful and impatient, found himself in the train, and

proceeding with slow and deliberate pace—speed it could not be called—along the *Neiderlandische Rhin Spoorweg*.

Alone in the carriage, there was no one to disturb the current of his thoughts, and dreamily he gazed out on the flat and most utterly uninteresting country through which he travelled—a district so divided between land and water that it is difficult to say to which it properly belongs, intersected in every direction by canals in which the hideous rows of pollard willows were reflected, and in some places by long lines of other trees, the flat surface of the far-stretching landscape being dotted here and there by a tiny village, a farm, perhaps a summer-house, while elsewhere a steeple or a windmill seemed to break the bleak and dull monotony of the Dutch horizon.

On and on sped the train, by Arnheim in Guelderland, called “the Dutch paradise,” though why, no one knows, as it is nearly all water, like everywhere else thereabouts; by Utrecht, the scene of the famous Treaty, which certainly interested him; by Emmerich, where, for the first time, he saw a modern

fortress, for this is a German one of the first class, and frowns with all its cannon over the junction of the Lippe with the Rhine. By this time evening was deepening into night and utter darkness, without a star to be seen, as the train, about seven o'clock, approached Zevenaar, and in the interest he felt at his near approach to the far-famed Rhine, Gerard had forgotten all about the Titian he had seen at Rotterdam.

Zevenaar is an obscure little town in Guelderland, on the right bank of the mighty river, where carriages are changed from the Dutch to the Prussian line of railway, and where, amid much harsh and guttural shouting, tickets are closely inspected, and baggage overhauled, amid prodigious bustle and confusion; glad to escape from which, after having a *petit verre* of cognac at the buffet, and lighting his cigar, Gerard took his seat in a carriage, a compartment of which he had, as before, to himself.

The night was wild and stormy, with great masses of crape-like clouds drifting across the starless sky. At the black-looking little station there were visible in its lights, and those

which came in weird gleams from the engine, the usual porters one sees everywhere, trundling barrows to and fro, but then the night scene was varied by the aspect of the burly and bearded travellers with their enormous meerschaum bowls dangling from their lips, a few Prussian soldiers with spike-helmets and goatskin knapsacks, and also by the conversation going on round about, and conducted in those loud, harsh, and guttural tones that are in sound so repellant to the English ear.

At last the train glided slowly out of the station. As it did so there came an unaccountable emotion or tremor into the mind of Gerard, and the woman of the picture came back to his memory, while a wild and clamorous presentiment arose within him, and seemed in some manner to prepare him for what followed.

A sense of mystery, against which he struggled in vain, seemed to pervade him. Gladly would he have quitted the carriage if by doing so he could have shaken it off; gladly would he have avoided what he knew by some strange prevision *was to be*.

There was a brief pause of the train before it steamed upon the vast and strong pontoon bridge by which it was to cross the Rhine, the rush of which could now be heard in the gloom close by ; and taking advantage of that pause, anxious to avoid the strange alarm that was in his heart, an alarm born of some passage in a dream, some previous earthly experience, or he knew not what, Gerard sprang up to step out, when the guard suddenly opened the door.

"Let me out," cried Gerard in English.

"*Seien sie ganz ruhig—rühren sie sich nicht!*" (Be quite still—don't move!) shouted the guard in German, as he ushered in a lady and locked the door. Then in another moment they felt the sudden oscillation of the train as it ran thundering, clanking, swaying, and heaving on the bridge of boats, past which the broad, deep waters of the Rhine were rushing with all the fury of a mighty mill-race.

But how can we describe the emotions of Gerard as he turned and looked upon his companion by the light of the solitary and blinking oil lamp in the roof of the carriage?

The woman of his prevision, and, to all appearance, the woman of the picture, sat before him, with her dark and sparkling eyes, that seemed to speak of some gloomy secret in her heart, fixed gravely upon him ; and then she gazed on the rushing river without, while Gerard, chilled with a sense of mystery, mingled with terror and admiration, surveyed her.

She seemed to be about thirty years of age, and the black hair, which was so wavy in the picture, was now coiled in masses round her magnificent head ; her face seemed always statuesque, yet full of latent energy ; her gestures wavy and graceful. Her hands were white, faultless in form, blue veined, with taper fingers, yet not small, for her figure was tall and ample, and they, like her handsome feet and shell-like ears, were in just proportion.

Her eyes were dark, somewhat sunken, and profoundly melancholy, and her whole face, in its delicate beauty and pallor of feature, seemed as perfect an embodiment of sorrow as Guido's portrait of Beatrice Cenci.

Never in all his life—it was not, as yet, a

long one, certainly—had Gerard gazed upon a face more unutterably fascinating and lovely, and yet so—so—what was it?—sad and pure! Her black dress was quaint and picturesque, but to Gerard, novelist and close observer though he was, indescribable.

When again she turned her face, he saw that her black hair came down in the centre of her forehead in a species of peak, like that in the picture; and, more than that, a tiny black mole, like a kissing-patch, was on the dimple on the left side of her mouth!

This mysterious woman was twin sister to the portrait, and the bodily realisation of the heroine of his romance, and, as their eyes met again, he felt himself compelled to speak.

"Pardon me, gracious madam," said he in German, and with quiet hesitation, "but you are very like a lady I have met before—quite a heroine—Salome."

"That is my name," she replied quietly, but in English.

"Salome!"

"And she was your heroine?"

"Yes," replied Gerard, in a breathless voice, as his heart filled with the former

emotions of fear and perplexity at coincidences so startling.

At that moment the flickering lamp in the roof went out, and he was alone in the middle of the black rushing river with this mysterious woman—this wonderful mystery seated opposite to him !

CHAPTER IV.

MORE MYSTERY.

ALONE in the darkness—yet not alone ; with whom or with *what* ? With all her beauty, a clamorous fear, enhanced by the strangeness of his surroundings, filled the heart of Gerard. The surging and swaying of the pontoons, the rush of the stream between them, the unusual noises of the train on such a bridge, and the weird gleams cast on the darkness without from the red furnace of the engine were all startling.

To quit the carriage was impossible. The doors were locked ; the train was in the mid channel, and the Rhine there is of great breadth. Closing his eyes amid the gloom, he strove to think—to listen if her dress rustled, and pressed his head against the cushioned seat of the carriage, and then all the legends he had ever heard of Germany,

the land of ghosts and diablerie, crowded into his excited fancy.

“This is absurd!” he thought, after a minute or two; “of what am I afraid?”

After a few minutes of keen excitement, the rumbling sounds incident to traversing the pontoon bridge ceased; the speed of the train slackened, and the grating of the brakes was heard, as they were let down in succession, and when the other side of the Rhine was reached, lights flashed into the darkened carriage from several points, and Gerard could see, as if by fitful gleams, the sad eyes of the pale beauty opposite, fixed apparently on vacancy.

The lamp was re-lighted, and after looking at her face from time to time, Gerard felt the necessity for saying something—perhaps resuming the thread of the brief and strange conversation of a few minutes before; for the train, though going at express speed, now had many miles to travel, many times almost parallel with the Rhine, before three hours would find them at Cologne; but when they did begin to converse, all that passed only added to his interest, wonder, and perplexity,

all the more so, as his heart, or something else, had by prevision told him that he was to meet her just as they had met.

The conversation, as naturally might be expected, too, between two strangers, was broken and hesitating at first; but so many new objects were visible in the light of the moon, which had now come out brilliantly, that it soon became more fluent and free, and somewhat to the surprise, and much to the relief of Gerard, he found that she spoke English purely and musically, but with a peculiar foreign accent, and a chord in every word that thrilled through him.

"And you said that you had met me, or one like me, I think?" said she, recurring by a coincidence to what was passing in Gerard's puzzled mind.

"It must have been in fancy," he stammered; "and yet last night I dreamt of you," he added, colouring at an admission so bold.

Her large calm eyes regarded him steadily, as she said, but without the vestige of wonder or a smile:

"You dreamt of me, you say—of *me*?"

"Yes, in that quaint old hotel—Scheppers-huis, in the Spaanesche Kade."

"Ah—I knew it years ago, when it bore a very different rank. I too, was in that hotel last night."

"You, madam?"

"But left Rotterdam by an early train."

So she had been under the same roof with him; separated from him perhaps by only a partition wall.

"How came you to dream of me?" she asked, after a pause.

"Not of you exactly," replied Gerard with growing confusion, "but of a picture in the Academy at Rotterdam."

"I know that picture," said she dreamily, as a pained expression came into her eyes, and her lips quivered; "but I never saw it there."

"Where then?"

"In the land where it was painted."

"The likeness is wonderful!"

"To me?"

"Yes, madam."

"Still?"

"Still! It is a Titian," urged Gerard,

perplexed by answers so strange ; but for a time she became silent and sunk in reverie, while the train, gliding through fertile Cleves, left the village of Griethausen behind.

Was she an actress amusing herself with him ; a public singer, or an eccentric ? Impossible, it seemed, that she could be either of the former, she had such an infinitesimal amount of luggage ; but, any way, she was totally unlike any woman Gerard had ever met before.

Was she married—or a widow ? Neither. She had no marriage hoop or ring of any kind on the faultless fingers of her ungloved hands.

He thought of the strange emotion in his own mind that preceded her appearance at Zevenaar, the circumstance that her name was Salome, and of the strange unbidden impulse that brought him to Germany, and oppressed by all this, he conversed with difficulty ; yet he found her a woman highly educated and well-read, of a poetical and sensitive nature like his own, much of a dreamer, too, so far as clairvoyance, spiritualism, and other modern ideas of such questions

are concerned, and in her sad dark eyes, when fixed on his, there was an intensity of gaze, a magnetic power, that made him already feel almost *en rapport* with her, and he feared that she might read his thoughts.

"You are a stranger in Germany, I think?" said he after a pause.

"Nay, I have been in Germany before—indeed, where have I *not* been!" she added, with one of her sad smiles—the saddest he had ever seen.

"Then you cannot, like me, feel how strange—how forlorn it is, to be alone in a foreign country."

"I have been forlorn all my life."

"You are not English—your home ——"

"Do not talk of home—I have none!" said she, with quiet bitterness. "Learn, sir," she added, with perfect confidence of manner, "that in all this world, since time began, no one has been more utterly alone than I, since —since——"

"Since when?" asked Gerard, as she cast her eyes upward.

"Since the first days of the Wandering Jew."

Gerard laughed now.

"Ah, you are becoming waggish," said he.

"Waggish!" she repeated, but more sorrowfully than with any tone of reproach.

"I know not why I feel impelled to talk to you—a stranger—of myself; but so it is."

Gerard thought of his fear, or fancy, that they were *en rapport*.

"I am one who since girlhood have never known one bright or happy hour, and how long, long ago was that time!"

"Why, how can you talk so?" said Gerard.

"You cannot be so very old."

"How old do you think?" she asked.

"Five-and-twenty—certainly not more, if it is not ungallant to guess; dark beauty is so difficult to——"

"There—that will do—enough of the language of flattery; you count, of course, by years."

"By what do you count?"

"Centuries and more, if agony of mind is taken into account."

"How can you jest thus?"

"I do not jest!"

"And your home—your country—where

are they?" asked Gerard, filled with irrepressible curiosity.

"My home exists no more—my country does, but under another name."

Gerard thought she must be a Polish exile, as he had heard much of the dark beauty of the Polish women.

"Ask me what you may, save of them," she continued.

"Why?"

"Because I cannot answer you."

"You are an Enigma!"

"So let me remain—I have been one to thousands."

"Why adopt—pray pardon me for saying so—this settled melancholy? You must be a prey to fancies—I hope not griefs, and inclined to cultivate what Byron calls

"That settled, ceaseless gloom
The fabled Hebrew wanderer bore,
That will not look beyond the tomb,
But cannot hope for rest before."

She shuddered, and eyed Gerard keenly—so keenly that he lowered his eyes, as he could see that, moved by some secret emotion,

her white temples throbbed, and her lips, though mobile, became stern and set.

"Pardon me," he urged, "if I have unwittingly hurt you."

"I have nothing to pardon," she replied sweetly; "but marvel not at anything I do or say."

"Why?"

"It is my nature apparently to do things that seem strange, and to say things that seem equally strange, to those who know me not."

"But wherefore?"

"All that is but a portion of my Destiny."

Was her mind affected? thought Gerard, with a thrill of intense pity. Her words and manner would certainly have alarmed him, but for the pleasure, the joy, he felt in the contemplation of her beauty, which was of so rare a character—so singular in its degree.

"You are very mysterious," said he with a smile.

"Few lives are without some mystery, and mine has been a long and bitter one."

"Long—yours?"

"I have said so."

"And an unhappy one?"

"In all this world," said she, with her softest and most thrilling tone, "there is no such thing as perfect happiness. A terrible experience has taught me this."

"I have had my own bitternesses in life, but nothing to cloud it as yours seems to be."

"Life!" she exclaimed, with the nearest approach to excitement she had shown; "your life is less than a grain of sand on the seashore—a narrow space between two interminable eternities! But here is Cologne," she said suddenly, as about half-past ten the lights of a great city came suddenly in view, with all its earthen fortifications, the vast cathedral like a dark mountain towering over all, and the broad Rhine, with all the lamps of its quays, hotels, and pontoon bridges, reflected on its waters with countless lines of rippling radiance, and the train ran snorting and clanking into a great railway station, the platform of which, with its crowds of muffled travellers arriving and departing, its piles of luggage, hurrying porters and general bustle, was like every one else all over the word.

"Here then we part," thought Gerard with his mind full of benevolence and kind-

ness for his companion, who, as she read what was passing in his mind, bowed with her nearest approach to a real smile.

The carriage door was thrown open, and she placed a hand in that of Gerard who assisted her to alight; but she steadily and gravely declined all other offers of assistance or attendance. Gerard feared to be intrusive, and while turning to secure his portmanteau from the van, she disappeared amid the crowd, and a sigh of regret escaped him as she did so.

How was it, he thought, that beauty so marvellous and striking was permitted to wander thus about the world, unguarded and alone? What could the terrible story of her past be, to make the present so gloomy and the future so hopeless? Where had she come from, and whither was she going? Whence the name of Salome, which had a Jewish and Scriptural sound; and whence that strange coincidence, her likeness to the old picture at Rotterdam?

These speculations were put to flight by a hoarse voice shouting in his ear "Hotel Hollande!" and the driver of a droski attached

to that establishment drew suddenly up before him.

“As well this hotel as any other,” thought Gerard, as he took his seat and was driven off at a furious rate, but for a short distance ; the hotel was soon reached, and a few minutes more found him in the spacious dining-room, from the tall windows of which he had an extensive view of the city, river, and the greatest pontoon-bridge. He had the vast apartment to himself, as at that season there were few tourists, and left thus alone, he thought more of the adventures of the past day than of the vague object that had really brought him to Germany, as he took his seat at the long and lonely dining-table, on which the waiters had laid covers for two.

He heard nothing of the hum of the city without, for the voice of his mysterious fellow traveller seemed yet to linger in his ear, till the rustle of a dress made him look up.

Salome had taken her seat at the table opposite to him !

“Fated to meet again,” said she, sweetly, as he started from his seat and bowed to her,

"by a singular coincidence, we have again chosen the same hotel."

"The same?"

"Yes—have you forgotten that at Rotterdam, and your dream?"

"Ah no—for it was of you."

She took no heed of the implied compliment, as she seated herself like an empress with so much indescribable grace, looking so pure and statuesque, with all her glorious hair dressed to perfection, without the appearance of a hair pin, or an odious frizette among its masses.

"Carve for me, please," said she.

"Are you going further than Cologne?" asked Gerard, while puzzling himself over the wine *carte*.

"To-morrow I go to Wiesbaden."

"So do I!" replied Gerard, as his heart leaped at the prospect of seeing more of her.

"All this is a most unexpected pleasure, because I was more mortified—more grieved, then I can express, to miss you at the station."

"I knew that we should meet again—though not so soon."

"You knew it?"

“ Yes.”

“ But how ? ”

“ I cannot tell you—by some secret power or impulse—by some spirit-born prevision that I find impossible to explain to you ; so let the mystery rest where it is,” she added, bending over her plate of cold chicken in a very matter-of-fact manner, despite the strange nature of her words.

CHAPTER V.

SALOME.

MOST strange it seemed to Gerard that he should have called the heroine of his novel Salome, and that the lady he had met should not only be so named, but be a living representation of the ideal his mind had pictured, and that he had with his pen striven to portray.

This was perhaps the reason that her face so haunted him, or could it be that they had met before, in spirit-land or in some previous state of existence, for those there are who say that such things may be. According to Wordsworth,

“ Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting :
The soul that rises with us, our life's star,
Hath had *elsewhere its setting*,
And cometh from afar :
Not in entire forgetfulness
And not in utter darkness,
But trailing clouds of glory, do we come
From God, who is our home :
Heaven lies about us in our infancy.”

Adopting this idea, it may be possible for the artist to paint, the poet to dream, and the novelist to depict, the scenes of some other life anterior to this—scenes or faces that may have been lying dormant in the brain till vaguely called forth by the spirit of memory.

Gerard looked for her name in the Fremdenbuch of the Hotel. She had written in a clear and beautiful hand, “the Fräulein Salome from ——” but the rest was strangely blurred and illegible; so he could but use the name he saw when sending her up betimes a charming bouquet before breakfast, with a crystal flask of *eau de cologne*.

Whether this were chance or design—a part of the mystery involving her movements—he knew not; but when they met next morning at the *table d’hôte* for breakfast, they were again alone, and he felt as if he had known Salome all his life; and if sad and grave in manner, this companionship with one so beautiful and unprotected was not without its peculiar charm.

Opposite the windows rolled the great river; beyond it were the streets and churches of the city, and high over all the vast mass

of the Dom Kirche, with its towers which have remained unfinished since the thirteenth century.

Did she care to see the city, Gerard suggested, he should be delighted to be her escort.

She thanked him—no ; she had seen it all “ ages ago,” she added ; a pardonable young-ladylike exaggeration.

Then she had no curiosity ?

“ No,” she replied, “ all curiosity has long since been dead in me. But do not let me prevent you from taking a ramble ; our train leaves at 11.45 for Coblenz, and you may see something of the city ere that time.”

“ I prefer, if you will permit me, to stay with you.”

“ As you please,” said she, with the faintest approach to a smile. So Gerard lingered by her side at a window of the hotel ; and it was pretty evident that, with a companion so dazzling and seductive, the young traveller’s intended volume of notes on Germany would not make much progress.

And while she sat gazing on the city—the “ Rome of the North,” with the masses and

spires of its many churches steeped in ruddy sunshine, and all the long extent of the river's bank from the Rheinau to Cæsar's Wall, he was entirely occupied with her. Of this occupation and admiration she was perfectly conscious, but seemed as perfectly indifferent about it ; but she sat with his bouquet in her lap.

Her arched eyebrows were perhaps a little too thick for strictly feminine beauty ; seen now by day, the full pouting lips were firm and sweet, yet hard in expression, with a shade just visible on the lovely upper lip ; and when she lifted the full white lids and long black fringes of her soft eyes, the latter seemed to shine and sparkle, and every glance went straight to the heart ; and a beautiful picture she seemed, as with her charming hands folded idly before her and her head thrown slightly back, she sat dreamily looking out on the sunlit masses of the old cathedral city.

Who or what was this woman ? thought he.

“ That, I believe, is the ancient gate known as the Rheins Hohe,” said Gerard, breaking a

long pause (during which she seemed sunk in reverie) and pointing to an embattled arch not far from the hotel windows.

"Ah—yes," she replied, suddenly brightening up, "Marie de' Medicis passed through that gate a few days before she died in that old house, No. 10, Sternan Gasse, and I remember that she nearly fell from her horse ——"

"You remember?" interrupted Gerard, at a casual remark so strange.

"Yes," she replied quietly.

"You remember to have heard?" suggested Gerard.

"As you please," she replied, but with a pained expression of face, and paused.

"She is making game of me," thought Gerard, and yet her strange gravity of demeanour repelled alike the idea and a momentary impulse he felt to "chaff" her in turn.

"She nearly fell from her horse—and what happened?"

"Nothing; she was faint and ill. She died a few days after. Her remains were sent to France, but her heart was left in Cologne."

"Perhaps you saw her funeral," said Gerard, in spite of himself.

"Perhaps I did," she replied. "Do not think I say these things to tease you," she suddenly added on seeing that he was regarding her with pain, doubt, and anxiety in his face. But every now and then she said strange things that startled him. Taking a flower from a jardinière close by, she was about to place it in her corsage, when he said,

"Do not place that in your bosom."

"Why?" she asked, pausing in the act.

"It is yellow hyacinth."

"Well—and what of that?"

"Don't you know it is the emblem of Death?"

"Yes, but it matters not to *me*."

"Do not say so—I am not without superstition."

"Those who come of mountain races never are. I shall, to please you, throw it away—thus; but such emblems are nothing to me. I can never die!"

Most singular was the tone of her voice, and unfathomable the expression of her eye, as she made this strange admission.

"Ah," said Gerard, trying to laugh, yet with a lump in his throat, "now you are at your wild speeches again."

At that moment a waiter announced that the vehicle was at the door to take them to the railway station, where they took the train, *via* Coblentz and other places for Wiesbaden, and where Gerard, by the judicious "tip" of two Prussian dollars, secured that they should have a compartment to themselves the whole way."

Seated sometimes by her side, sometimes opposite to her, Gerard felt all the gay charm and stirring novelty of the situation, as the train sped swiftly on for miles and miles parallel with the Rhine, after Bonn was left behind, and every turn of the view, every mile or less, brought to sight some castled crag, some quaint old church, or toylike village of picturesque houses on the vine-clad banks; Rolandseck, the scene of Schiller's "Knight Toggenburg" on the right; then on the left, high Drachenfells, with the cave where the dragon was slain by the horned Siegfried, the hero of the Niebelungen lay, and so on. His "John Murray" was seldom out of Gerard's

hand, and he only relinquished it to gaze into the dark eyes of his passive and indifferent companion, whom no grandeur or beauty in the scenery seemed to interest—not even Coblentz, or the might of Ehrenbreitstein, with four hundred cannon bristling high in the air. Doubtless she had “done” the Rhine many times, he thought, with a sigh, and found nothing in it; yet with all this strangeness of manner, as hour by hour went past in her society, he felt himself more and more attracted by her.

“Salome!” said he suddenly, after a long pause, during which his eyes had been bent tenderly upon her.

She started, but said quietly :

“Well?”

“May I call you Salome?” he asked softly.

“Yes; it is my name.”

“Oh, thanks for the privilege!” he exclaimed.

“And you—how are you named?”

He told her, adding, “Pray call me only Gerard: but Salome what—what more?”

“Nothing,” she replied, fixing her large eyes upon him.

"Have you no surname?"

"No. Like many noble Germans, my family had none."

"Had? You speak in the past tense, Salome."

"Because they are dead."

"All?"

"Yes, all; I am alone in the world," she replied, with an expression of intense sadness in her face.

"Surely you must have many admirers—it may be lovers?" said he, with a pang.

"Many who have loved me: yes, of course."

"And in vain?"

"Yes."

"Why? Because none were worthy of you?"

"No; because they might as well love the moon, or its beams upon the water."

This was not encouraging; it chilled Gerard, and caused him to relinquish a desire to take one of her hands in his; but whatever her odd speeches meant, he could not fail to discover, and to be impressed by the fact, that her deep knowledge of human

nature, and her information concerning every country in Europe, and even Asia, were very remarkable in their quality and degree. He felt himself like a child or a fool by her side.

Whence came all her strange, varied, and endless recollections, which seemed almost to tell of an often and reiterated existence of the divine essence which we term soul? Was her life but a case of repeated metempsychosis, equalling that of Hindoo belief? Or was it—oh, horror! he felt his heart die within him at the suspicion in one so lovely and alluring—was it madness?

“You are thinking of me,” said she, bending her eyes keenly upon him as this distracting idea occurred to his mind.

“Salome,” he exclaimed, as he felt himself change colour as if convicted of an unworthy thought, “you are incomprehensible.”

“There is nothing strange in that.”

“Why, Salome?”

“Because there are times—many, many times—when I cannot comprehend myself.”

From all he could gather, her life seemed to be without aim or object; and in all the many subjects she touched on she never referred in

the faintest or most remote manner to friends, relations, or home ; hence was the ever recurring question, to Gerard—who or what could she be ? And hourly deeper and more tender grew his interest in her, till he seemed to have no thought but for her and with her.

What or whence was the occult power this woman possessed over him ? It was something beyond her marvellous beauty ; but whence did it spring, that he felt as one in a dream when by her side, and that she could mould him to all her wishes, and seemed to know even his secret thoughts in spite of himself.

She had, he saw, in her sweet, soft, solemn dark eyes a rather unpleasant habit at times of staring fixedly over his head or shoulder, as if it were at something behind him, something unseen by him, like those who are said to be ghost-seers, or ghost-haunted. Yet withal, he found himself fast learning to love her, and thought that affection, in time, might cure the strange and morbid gloom and sorrow that seemed to absorb her.

How strange and unnatural to him now, with these new-born thoughts and hopes in

his brain, seemed the superstitious terror, yet mingled with interest, he had of her on that night they crossed the rushing Rhine together, and the carriage lamp went out.

When he recalled it he felt ashamed of himself, and feeling half conscious that from some subtle affinity she was able, in his eyes perhaps, to read his thoughts, he shrank from the fear of her knowing that clamorous alarm which he now deemed so unworthy of her and of himself.

Again the lamps were lighted after St. Goarshausen was passed, and amid the darkness they could barely see there the finest glories of the Rhine, hemmed in by wild and precipitous rocks, with the Castle of Rheinfells looking grimly down, as it were, from amid the stars.

Long ere the lights of Wiesbaden, the scene of his mother's bitterest sorrows came in view, she had permitted her ungloved hand to rest in that of Gerard. How it came about he never precisely knew, but his heart was already beating with all the happiness and hope of unspoken love—unspoken as yet.

CHAPTER VI.

FATHER AND SON.

A FEW pages back we left the luckless Julian *en route* to Westminster in search of a cavalry recruiting sergeant, whose gay uniform, military port, and magnificent swagger he had more than once remarked ; and Julian, though thin and wasted, and well-nigh famished in aspect, felt his heart begin to beat high as he strode along.

“ Now,” thought he, “ for a stout heart and a stern will, and to face the world, or the devil himself, in my shirt-sleeves ! Fool that I have been not to think of this resource before ! ”

Common sense told him that the age of sword-in-hand heroism was almost passed away ; yet, though poverty and desperation were the primary movers in the new flush of pride, he felt all the wild desire to do, to dare, or to die, if he could but win a name

in place of that of which his father had robbed him—the name embalmed in Scotland's poetry and history; but stern common sense again told him that no marshals' batons were to be found in the knapsacks of those who win glory for that most sordid of paymasters, John Bull, some of whose sons, with Crimean and Indian ribbons on their breasts, were sweeping the crossings in the vicinity of that very rendezvous towards which he was now hastening.

Such second thoughts were not encouraging; but like Macbeth's bravo, he felt already,

“ So weary with disasters, tugged with fortune,
That I would set my life on any chance,
To mend it, or be rid on't.”

Lost in his own tumultuous thoughts, and proceeding to cross the street mechanically, he was totally unaware of the rapid approach of a dashing mail-phaeton drawn by a pair of spirited horses, and all that passed for the next few seconds was like a horrible dream or electric shock—he felt a lash from a whip—a crash—a blow on his breast, another as his head came in violent contact with the cause-

way, and he was under the hoofs of the horses, lying like a gathered heap.

“Hi, hi, hi—ahoy, you fellow, get out of the way will you, and be d——d to you!” cried the imperious voice of their driver, mingled with the shriek of a girl, as Julian was dragged up by many ready hands, bleeding and half senseless, and heard voices saying it was a miracle that he had not been trampled to death. Supported on the strong arm of a policeman, Julian looked for a moment in the face of *him* who drove the phaeton, and the faces of those who sat beside him—Kate, and Amy Kerr—and then closed his eyes, he hoped for ever, so sick and sad was he at heart.

Their eyes had met—the eyes of the father and his son! Oh, *that look* in the face of each.

The face of the Earl was not then a pleasant one. It was, if handsome still, a faded and worn one—worn by years of *blasé* life, amid the feverish excitement of the race-course and betting-ring; the still more fervid fever of Parisian gambling-hells, or those of Homburg, and many a time of old in the

Cursaal of Wiesbaden, when the gas glared down on the faded cloth of the roulette or rouge-et-noir tables—a grim, startled, and feverish face, that Julian had first seen on the day of the otter-hunt; and the shriek that he had heard had come from the lips of Kate.

Deloraine was less alarmed, or shocked, than exasperated, chiefly by a nervous dread as he thought of the police—a charge, perhaps, for too rapid driving; of “those cursed newspaper fellows,” and *who* the injured young man might be proved to be, if he died and the affair came to be sifted.

“You’ll give me your card, sir?” said a police sergeant, civilly enough, as he saw that he had evidently to do with one of “the upper ten,” and he gave a salute on receiving the piece of pasteboard, adding, “I only ask it as a matter of form, because more may come out of this accident.”

This was precisely what Deloraine dreaded, and giving a crown to the sergeant, he said briefly:

“Send him home in a cab,” drove rapidly away, leaving Julian, half sinking and half

supported, in the centre of a fast gathering crowd.

"Home, indeed," said the sergeant, "the poor fellow don't look much as if he had one, and this is a case for the hospital—there are bones broken, I fear."

A cab was quickly at hand, and Julian, half senseless, with blood flowing from his head and mouth, was rapidly driven away, he knew not, and cared not, whither.

It is doubtful if the Earl and Countess much enjoyed the remainder of their drive. *He* had a dread that Julian, in the extremity of pain or of just indignation, might assert who he was, if he knew the fact, of which knowledge the Earl had some doubts; yet he hated him not the less. *She* had a dread of showing too much interest or concern, lest the Earl might discover—if he did not already know—that Julian had been the lover of her girlhood. Amy Kerr alone was free to lament the too apparent sad fate of one with whom she had spent many a gay and happy hour at home; and her incessant recurrences to these reminiscences, together with her asserted intention of discovering and befriending Julian,

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filled the Earl with more rage than he dared display to her as a guest and the friend of his wife.

Meanwhile, how fared it with the object of all these conflicting thoughts?

A severe injury of the head, a couple of broken ribs, the loss of that which he could ill afford in a state so debilitated, much blood, were the result of that street accident, which perhaps would not have occurred had Julian been less immersed in his own sad thoughts.

Could Gladys, or the old silver-haired Captain, who, like her, worshipped him, though he was, like Gerard, a child of misfortune and evil augury—those who had watched the little couch in which the twin-brothers lay asleep with anxiety and fear if but a finger of either ached, and would have tempered the wind of heaven to both—have seen Julian, as he lay there in the white-washed ward of a great hospital, with its many iron beds in rows against the bare bleak wall, with the names, ages, and numbers of the many sufferers on tin labels hung overhead—could they have seen him as he lay

there, we say, it might have broken their hearts.

For many hours he lay as one in a dream or doze, scarcely knowing what had happened, and so stunned and sunk in strength that only a dull and aching sense of pain occurred to him. His frame, so wasted by past privation, was scarcely discernible as he lay under the bed-clothes. He seemed the ghost of his former self, and his once beautifully cut features, now pallid and wasted, where not concealed by the bandages about his head, were like a pinched waxen mask ; and the bones of his delicate hands were like those of a skeleton as they lay on the coarse hospital coverlet, or played fretfully, or unconsciously, with it.

The keen sense of pain in the broken ribs—a pain that felt at times like fire scorching him—recalled him then to consciousness ; but whenever it subsided his mind relapsed into torpor, or wandered, less perhaps from the effect of the accident itself, than of the weeks of actual want that had preceded it.

“Gerard—Gerard,” he would say with his pale blue lips, “where are you—where ?

Kinless—kinless—my only brother, we are alone in the world.”

There are certain times when in dreary moods we seem to go over all our past life from stage to stage, when the faces and voices of “the lost, the distant, and the dead,” with many a forgotten episode, come back to us by the association of ideas; but it was not quite thus with Julian, whose mind was wandering then, and there revolved before him a phantasmagoria of his past: now he was by the trouting stream where so often he had fished and sketched with Kate, and the murmur of its waters, as they stole under the long yellow broom, came pleasantly to his ear; anon he was at the trysting-place, the old white wicket, waiting for a Kate who never came; then he saw his mother’s grave under the old yew-tree, and then, as if by association of ideas, he was in his grandfather’s sick-room at Fairy Knowe, with the dark shadow of death hanging over it, for the old man was dead, and the grey light of the morning came slowly in on his thin and reverend face, out of which the lines of care had become effaced for a time, while Gerard and he stood hand in

hand, looking for the last time upon their only earthly friend ; then the day of the funeral, when, with the fallen leaves of the past year whirling in the blast, he had been gathered to his rest, and the household fires were extinguished for ever !

Then, as the past fled and the present came before him, the thought of what his own fate might be if he were thrust into the world again, a cripple, or it might be a helpless and life-long invalid, for he knew not the extent or nature of his injuries. Better, far, a thousand times to die ; and if he did, what then ?

There would be none to claim his remains : what a sequel to his sad fate—the dissecting-room perhaps, and then a pauper's grave, where a dozen men are thrust wholesale into one hideous hole. He writhed in horror at the idea, and sighed as he thought of the peaceful green village burial-place at home in Ettrick ; and as if in mockery of his bitter thoughts and sufferings, there seemed to come ever and anon the refrain of a doggrel he had heard a wretched creature singing in the Strand :

“Poor fellow ! here endeth thy painful reverses,
After the endurance of every ill ;
Among poultices, patients, and hospital nurses,
With sprigs of anatomy, plaister and pill.”

So hours of pain and weariness, of torpor and dreams, stole on, succeeding each other monotonously ; at times he scarcely knew day from night, or what it was with which the nurse fed him by spoon, as if he were a child again ; and if—in his intervals of intelligence—he longed for death, it seemed but too likely that his grim desire might be gratified ere long.

CHAPTER VII.

NUMBER THIRTY-ONE.

THE day succeeding the accident to Julian went by, and the second and the third days succeeded, but Kate could discover no sign or intention, on the part of Lord Deloraine, to attempt to discover or befriend the young man whom his mail-phaeton had struck down in the street; and a certain secret apprehension sealed her own lips on the subject; nor did she discover to which hospital he had been conveyed, till Amy Kerr, who had been closely searching all the daily papers for some paragraph on the subject, came in hot haste to lay one before her, which told her all she required to know.

The Earl, who deemed it respectable to attend to Parliamentary duties now, was luckily absent at an early sitting of the House, so Kate—we may still call her so—announced

to Amy her intention of making some inquiries concerning Julian.

"I shall go with you," said Amy, whose soft face coloured with more than pleasure.

"No, no, Amy dear. That may not be," replied her friend.

"Why, Kate?"

"Because I would rather go alone."

"Alone! Won't you take one of your sisters, perhaps Ermentrude, with you?"

"No, not even Ermentrude," replied the other, as she rang for her maid.

Amy became silent; she felt piqued, nay more than piqued—she was jealous, in fact! Could it be that Kate still—still, though married, coquettishly wished to exert some influence over a poor crushed and down-trodden fellow like Julian Melville?

When duly gloved and bonneted, the Countess desired the ponderous and most respectable-looking butler, Mr. Funnell, to summon a cab.

"A cab!" he repeated in surprise to himself, adding aloud, "My lady, the carriage was ordered round about this time."

"I shall not require the carriage, Mr.

Funnell," she replied impatiently, "I am going eastward, and Lord Deloraine does not like the horses being taken into the City."

"Now where can she be a-going to?" meditated the puzzled butler, as he despatched the Buttons of the establishment to bring "the tidiest-looking four-wheeler" from the nearest stand, and in this vehicle Kate set forth, her face looking pale, but her heart beating fast with excitement.

The whole expedition and its object seemed something like a painful dream to her, nor did she quite realise that it was a stern fact till the cab drew up in the quadrangle of the red brick hospital, with its rows of monotonous-like windows, and she found herself threading the whitewashed corridors that led to the wards where the surgical cases were treated, with a fat and rather motherly-looking nurse as her guide.

When, after gliding in a species of horror and terror past the rows of beds in each of which lay a poor suffering creature, with wasted cheeks and hollow glistening eyes, she at last saw Julian from a little distance, for she dared not approach too close—and saw him in the

condition we have described, her soul seemed to die within her, and she was about to fly from the place.

"Oh, will he die, do you think?" she asked in a low and trembling voice, as she placed a hand on the arm of the nurse.

"It looks very like it, my lady," replied the woman, shaking her head and her pendulous chin, having the morbid love of the vulgar to take the gloomiest view of everything.

"Die—so young, so handsome!" thought Kate, whose face, costume, and bearing the nurse was eyeing with something of surprise and reverence; "die—death! It is a catastrophe not to be thought of."

She trembled and shrunk from the contemplation of it; death—oh, no, no—not for him, and met under the hoofs of her carriage-horses—Julian, whose kisses had been rained upon her brow, her eyes and lips, and on her red golden hair, in the joyous past times!

"Is he in pain?" she timidly asked.

"Of course, my lady," replied the nurse; "he has jabbered a good deal in his sleep, and been that awful restless! But here

comes the doctor who attends the ward," she added, as a rather spruce-looking young man came jauntily forward, bowed low, and, greatly impressed by the appearance of his visitor, asked if he could be of any service.

"I came to inquire about the—the young gentleman who was injured by a carriage."

"No. 31—ah—Julian Melville."

"I hope from my heart, that—that," began Kate.

"It is not a dangerous case, so far as the fractured ribs are concerned," said the doctor anticipating her.

"Thank Heaven!"

"Oh, no—only—it would seem that *other* causes are at work."

"Other causes?"

"Disturbance of the mind. He has—or imagines that he has—suffered some grievous wrong. There is an extreme debility about the patient."

"Debility—caused by what?"

"Recent loss of blood, added—to——" and the doctor paused, and even coloured visibly, being dubious in what way this brilliant

young lady was related to, or interested in, the helpless creature then before them.

"Added to what?" asked Kate with her eyes dilated.

"A process of starvation—he must have been for days and days without solid food ere the accident occurred."

"Oh, my God!" she exclaimed, with clasped hands.

"If we can induce him to take plenty of nourishment, a little time will cure all that, and restore his strength. Then there may be no doubt of his recovery."

Julian, asleep, was tossing restlessly from side to side, and, as he did so, suddenly displayed an arm and shoulder, fleshless and attenuated, almost like those of a skeleton.

Kate shuddered and turned away her eyes, in which the tears were welling fast, till the nurse replaced the coverlet. Then, as if some mysterious sense of her presence had occurred to him, he murmured her name.

"Kate! Kate!"

"He often mutters thus in his sleep," said the doctor. "Do you know who he refers to?"

"No," replied Kate, colouring deeply.

"And also of his mother. Is she alive?"

"She has long been dead. Does he ever speak of his father?"

"Yes; but with something of repugnance."

"Most strange!" said Kate.

Julian, hearing voices, opened his eyes. How sunken, and with all their darkness how unnaturally bright they seemed, as he looked around him with a gaze that was blank, for his sight was as yet too dim to recognise Kate where she stood, yet the wild gaze went to her heart like a dagger. She turned away, dreading all recognition then, and feeling oppressed by the place, the scene, and all its circumstances to such an extent that she feared fainting, she withdrew, escorted to the door by the doctor, who did not ask her name, though he was burning with natural curiosity to know who his beautiful visitor was, and promised that all her wishes regarding Julian's removal to a separate room, and providing him with every comfort her purse could furnish, should be duly attended to.

"A little time and I shall come again," said she, presenting her hand as he closed the cab-door; and she drove away, forgetting that her visit alone might cause speculation, scandal, or peril, for her heart was full of great pity, and for this she had but one confidante, her friend and gossip, Amy Kerr.

When seated with the latter, who, pale, tearful, and somewhat envious of her visit, listened to her narrative within a stately room, the magnificent furniture of which displayed many marvels in rosewood and buhl, yellow satin hangings, Sevres china, pictures, mirrors, and statuettes, with that view of the noble park which all the windows of Park Lane command, the contrast between it and the place she had left came powerfully to her mind.

There were stately dinners at home and elsewhere, drives, balls, drums, vapid visits to pay, and the whole routine of fashionable life to be undergone; but they had all, *pro tem.*, lost their charm to the young Countess; undergone, we say, for amid them all, to do her justice, she saw a species of spectrum—the half-killed and well-nigh wholly-starved

Julian Melville, stretched on his pallet in the cold, bare, whitewashed ward of the hospital, and numbered as thirty-one !

But thanks to her care and injunctions, though he knew it not, when Julian, a day or two after her visit, began to look about him, he found himself, not in the great common ward surrounded by scenes of suffering and even death, but in a pleasant little separate apartment, brightened and made gay by fresh flowers in vases, by little pictures on the walls, and surrounded by comforts that were, to the friendless patients in that abode of suffering, unknown ; but the cause or source of this change was made apparent to him when one day his nurse ushered in a lady.

She threw up her veil, and he saw the face of Lady Deloraine—of the fair but faithless Kate ! For a few moments both were full of the most painful agitation, and both could have crushed their hands into their hearts, were it possible, to allay their frightful beating ; yet Kate suffered most, perhaps, for Julian, from causes to her unknown, had been fast steeling himself to the necessary amount of indifference.

It was impossible for him to behold her, when he was so weak and so utterly without another friend in the world, unmoved; but there was no longer in his heart the wild turmoil of the past, or even the momentary fascination he felt when, after a lapse of time, he saw her on that day driving in the Row, and Amy Kerr uttered his name aloud.

"This is most kind of you, Lady Deloraine," said he (making an effort to pronounce the name), after he had answered her nervously-made inquiries as to his progress.

"Call me Kate, Julian," said she, almost passionately, as she seated herself in the nurse's chair; "I am Kate to you when none are near who know us. Thank Heaven, you are recovering."

"But for the sake of Gerard, I would still hope I may be dying now. God knows, Kate," he continued, in a faint voice, "how I have struggled for food and to keep my head above water; but the black waves of misfortune have flowed over me at last."

"And where is Gerard?"

"Alas! I know not."

"You know not?" she exclaimed.

"Somewhere in Germany—probably Wiesbaden."

"What took him there—away from you?"

"To write a book, I believe," replied Julian, half evasively.

"Ah, his novel was a great success. Amy Kerr and I read every page of the three volumes in one day."

"In one day! I believe it took poor Gerard six months to write."

"How powerfully he describes the dark and beautiful Salome! One might know her anywhere."

"She broke her lover's heart, according to the tale," said Julian, gloomily.

"Oh, hearts are not so easily broken," said Kate, with a little nervous laugh, "though perhaps you think mine a weak one."

"I can forgive that, but not the treachery of your husband," said Julian, through his clenched teeth.

"Treachery—to you?" asked Kate, in surprise.

"Not exactly to me—in the first instance, at least," said Julian, on whose tongue the great secret was trembling.

“To whom, then?”

“To whom matters not—matters not now,” he replied, huskily; then he added, “Are you happy, Kate?”

“Yes.”

“Thank Heaven!”

He scrutinised her keenly. Her beautiful face was paler than its wont, but that might have been from agitation consequent to the present interview; there was a careworn expression about it, certainly, but that came doubtless of the fast and fashionable life she now led—one so different from the old times at Kingsmuir.

“Does he—does Lord Deloraine know that you are here?”

“No, Julian.”

“Why so?”

“Because I dare not tell him!”

“What does he suspect?” asked Julian, bitterly.

“Nothing, Julian.”

“I would rather have had a hundred rivals than *him* who robbed me of you!”

“If you broach this subject—adopt this tone—I must go. I did not think, Julian,

that now, you would waste a thought on me."

"Nor do I—in the old sense."

"That is well, Julian. Think of me only as the wife of another."

"But you know not *whose* wife you are," he replied bitterly and closed his eyes, as if oppressed by thought.

"May we not be friends, Julian," urged Kate, lightly touching his wasted hand, which was white as her own.

"No!" he replied, bluntly.

"Oh—why?"

"I cannot tell you."

"Is it because you hate my husband?"

"God forbid that I should hate him, though doubly has he wronged me—more than he supposes, so far as you are concerned; and more than you can ever know, so far as I am concerned!"

"These words are most mysterious."

"Then don't seek to probe the mystery," said Julian, so passionately that she drew back in real alarm, and felt in great perplexity as to what he could refer to.

Julian regretted his sudden, and to her his

most unmeaning, petulance; but he felt a grim satisfaction in the conviction that if the worst happened to him, and he actually died where he then lay, there was one not far off who would sorrow for him, and see that the last sad offices were duly rendered to him—Kate Kingsmuir!

But Julian was one of those fellows who are not easily killed, and when she again visited him, she found him progressing, though slowly, towards recovery, for the gloom of his mind acted severely upon his general system.

“It is hard for me to think, Kate, that peace and joy are fled from me for ever,” said he.

“At your years, Julian—oh, absurd!”

“They are laid for ever in the past.”

“My poor boy,” said she, playfully, “don’t talk thus; but make the best of the present.”

“The present? Look around you!”

“What have you been doing in London these many months past?”

“Starving!”

“Have you no plans—no line of action for the future?”

“None, Kate—exactly.”

“Poor Julian; you leave all to Heaven.”

"And the inspiration of the moment. Most likely I shall become a soldier."

"A soldier?" she repeated sorrowfully ;
"how sad is your fate, Julian."

"Sad indeed—God knows, and poor Gerard too! Our secret you know not, and never may know" ("nor the sad story of *her* whose place you hold," he nearly added). "Our fate was made for us; you made your own, Kate, and may it be a happy one."

"Yet, in spite of all superstition I was wedded with the ring you gave me, in play, I think, Julian."

"In no spirit of play—my mother's marriage ring—oh, my God! What a singular fatality! Our paths in life must lie for ever apart, Kate, so for Heaven's sake come near me no more."

"You are surely angry with me, Julian."

"No, Kate—all anger has passed from me; I shall ever pray that you may be happy, Kate, and that Heaven may bless you."

"And I pray it may bless you, Julian," said she as she withdrew.

Deloraine knew nothing as yet of her visits, and, sooth to say, she was not anxious

to come again, for Julian's manner was strange; it was *not* precisely a lover's regret.

"The more bitterly—the more severely—he thinks of me, it makes it all the easier for him to forget me," thought Kate as she drove homeward, while Julian was annoyed by a visitor of a very different kind—a low limb of the law a dirty-looking little Jew solicitor, having thick sable locks saturated with pomade, a nose like a jargonelle pear, and a general flashy appearance, so far as much coarse jewellery went to make it.

With a husky voice and a slimy manner, he made various earnest inquiries as to Julian's state of health, his injuries, and the nature of the accident, till cut short by the latter saying sharply:

"To what do all these questions tend, sir?"

"The action for damages, my tear sir, which no doubt you mean to raise against Lord Deloraine—a man of wealth my tear sir—a man of wealth, and if you will entrust me with the case——"

"Begone, sir—I have no wish for your officious services."

“ But my tear sir —— ”

“ Begone I tell you, or —— ”

“ I presume you are aware that I expect a fee ? ”

“ For what ? ”

“ Coming here from the City, and consulting with you concerning your accident and the action to be raised —— ”

“ You are a cool scoundrel ! ”

The eye of the Jew sparkled with delight, and he looked hastily round the apartment.

“ There are no witnesses,” said Julian, “ so doubly are you a scoundrel, I repeat. Begone at once, or—— ”

Julian seized the water caraffe on the table by his bedside, on which the Jew solicitor vanished ; while the other, incapable of much action, sank back on his pillow flushed and trembling.

Despite the care of the young Countess, the circumstance of her visits to the hospital reached the ears of Lord Deloraine, or he somehow suspected them.

“ So you have been to visit that fellow we knocked down in the street the other day ? ” said he, abruptly, and Kate coloured

deeply at his tone ; “ did he—ah—tell you who he was—or is ? ”

“ He did not require to do so,” she replied.

“ Ah—how ? ”

“ He was my old playmate—old friend.”

“ So you know all about him ? ”

“ Of course ! ”

“ Anything more ? ”

“ More, Deloraine ? ”

“ Did he not say, or tell you anything of his family ? ”

“ Nothing that I did not know already.”

He eyed her furtively and keenly ; and it was evident that Julian, if he actually knew who his father was—which Deloraine doubted he did—had said nothing on the subject to Kate. Times there were when the Earl almost forgot the suddenly-discovered existence of the sons of Gladys Melville ; and now, when he looked on his girl wife, so handsome, so highly-bred, the idea pierced his heart—or what passed for such—like a sword, with disgust and dismay, lest Julian, in pain, sorrow, or in spite, might reveal to her the secret of his parentage. So these

absurd visits to the hospital, and all messages and inquiries, must be stopped.

Kate had views beyond mere charity or humanity with regard to Julian. She knew many girls, young, pretty, and *rich*. Could he but be brought to love one of these ! She actually spoke of her project to her husband, whose brow grew dark as a thundercloud at the suggestion.

"Here, he cannot and shall not come," said the Earl in great anger ; "what the devil is this—this fellow to you ?"

It was the first time he had ever adopted such a tone to her, and she shrank back in alarm lest he might have heard of her past relations with the unfortunate Julian.

"You are too impulsive and inconsiderate, Kate," he added, seeing that her lip quivered and her eyes filled.

"But think of the severity of the accident ; and then the dictates of common humanity ——"

"Common fiddlestick ! It does not be-
seem my wife, the Countess of Deloraine, to
run after a nameless nobody lying in the
common ward of a London hospital !"

"Nameless — do *you* call him nameless, Deloraine?"

It was now the turn of the latter to change colour.

"Certainly!" said he.

"He is the grandson of papa's old friend, Melville of Fairy Knowe, in Ettrick," urged Kate.

"What is that to me?" asked Deloraine, in a more subdued tone, however. "I shall send him a fifty-pound note as a plaister for his bruises—the stupid fool, to be mooning in a London street at mid-day! You may enclose it to him, if you choose, with my advice that he should go to America, or anywhere he pleases, but not to remain and starve in this huge Babylon."

"I would rather die, Deloraine, than put such an affront upon him!"

"In calling upon him you surely did not take the carriage?"

"Of course not."

"How then?"

"I went by cab."

"Lady Deloraine cabbing it at mid-day. Now what the devil—excuse me, Kate

—will the servants think of such a proceeding ? ”

“ What they please ; I was doing no harm.”

But Deloraine frowned, as some of his past experiences, when more than one “ noble lady ” had taken a common cab when it suited her to meet *him*, flashed upon his memory.

“ Enough of this,” said he. “ I don’t want my little Kate to go in for being either a philanthropist or a strong-minded woman ; the first is a fool, the second is bad form—very. This fellow had a brother, had he not ? ” he asked, abruptly.

“ Yes ; Gerard, who wrote that clever novel.”

“ Where is he ; dead, eh ? ” asked Deloraine, hopefully.

“ No ; he has gone to Wiesbaden.”

“ To Wiesbaden ! What the deuce has taken *him* there ? ”

“ I do not know.”

A dark expression gathered in the face of the Earl, and he turned to the window, lest Kate’s sharp eyes might perceive it.

“Bah!” thought he, “what matters it? Every proof was lost in the hands of that Scotch lawyer fellow, so what cause have I to care—or to fear!”

CHAPTER VIII.

AMY KERR.

UNKNOWN to her husband, Kate continued to send to the hospital the finest hot-house grapes, iced drinks, expensive wines, delicate preparations of jellies, which Julian was loth to accept, yet to decline which would have been churlish; while books, papers, periodicals, and flowers *ad libitum* were left for him by both Kate and Amy Kerr.

In the mind of Julian there was an exaggerated sense of the time he had lain there, lost in a wilderness of vague and despairing fancies, or gloomy anticipations of the future, when he must go forth, hopeless and penniless, into the terrible world again.

That common humanity, which my Lord Deloraine so heartily despised, could not permit Kate to cease her kindness to Julian, or relinquish all knowledge of his recovery and future welfare. She could not, consistently

with her wifely duty, visit the hospital again, after what had been said to her on the subject; but Amy Kerr might do so, though not a matron, under the care of Mrs. Funnell the housekeeper, who saw nothing strange in the circumstance of inquiries being made after the young man who had been injured by the Earl's phaeton; and joyfully Amy undertook the pleasant task, for, sooth to say, Julian had been her peculiar weakness when far away at home in Ettrick.

Amy was an heiress: the heiress of Ker-shope, with ever so many thousand fertile acres in the Merse, and pastoral lands in Ettrick. If Julian would but fall in love with her, thought Kate. She conceived the idea, and had all the wish for such a sequel, without a pang of regret or envy—why should she have either now?

“We are two *bonnes commères*, guid Kim-mers, as papa used to say at Kingsmuir,” said Kate laughing, as she and the other lovely little conspirator sat together at afternoon tea in a tiny Sèvres service, and actually developing their plans together. “I wonder what Deloraine would think of this. Poor

me!" added Kate, toying with her spoon. "I wonder if I shall ever act the *grande dame* to perfection, and suit his standard—I don't think so. But now with regard to your mission."

"We must be careful in what we do, Kate. Julian will not endure being patronised or protected. He is by nature so proud that he is easily hurt."

"I never used to find him so."

"Times are changed with you both, and circumstances, too, most fearfully so far as he is concerned."

The face of Amy was fair, soft, and charming. . She had golden-brown hair, with dark blue eyes; her lips were sweet and arch in expression; she had a dimpled chin, a slender rounded throat, and most beautiful hands; thus her appearance during her brief visits of inquiry was a source of intense interest to the medical staff and young "sprigs of anatomy."

"That fellow in the private ward is to be envied," said one; "wish it was my luck to have such a girl—regular tip-topper—running after *me* in this fashion. Shouldn't mind a

smash of the skull or a compound fracture to create such interest. But who the dooce is the fellah ? ”

“ Nobody knows,” said another sawbones, scraping a vesta on the corridor wall ; “ but if single ladies have not a vested right to look after single gentlemen, in the name of Cupid, king of gods and men, who have it ? ”

“ How do you know that either of them is single ? ” asked a third.

“ Never thought of that, so help me bob ! ”

In the heart of Amy—now filled by one thought, and totally ignorant that she was a source of interest or speculation to anyone—there was a sense of affording protection to one who was helpless, blended with her own early and secret regard for Julian Melville, and she actually pitied and loved him all the more because he had been so pitilessly cast off by Kate ; nor did she repine at, or shrink from, the idea of catching his heart, as so many in this world are caught, on the rebound.

Approaching convalescence, he was now seated in an easy chair, propped with pillows, and looking the spectre of himself ; yet it

was marvellous that Amy saw not the likeness his face bore to that of Deloraine, even to the proud and fretful knit of the dark eyebrows over the straight and handsome nose. Young though he was, his forehead was not so smooth as it had been; care and destitution had ploughed two strong furrows across it; and when Amy looked at him, seated there so helplessly, she remembered, and bitterly repented, some of the half-mocking words concerning him she had, when inspired by jealousy, uttered to Kate at Kingsmuir, for there had been something more than a school-girl rivalry between them on the subject of Julian. But Amy took heart anew now, and all jealousy was dead. Kate was removed for ever from her path, and she had Julian all to herself!

“Kate has ceased to visit me,” he said.

“But she has sent you those beautiful grapes—the truth is that Lord Deloraine objected to her coming here.”

“Why, Miss Kerr?” asked Julian, his pale face blushing.

“I know not, so I am her substitute in caring for you, and the liberty that London

life affords permits me to do so. But you are not disappointed thereby?" added Amy throwing up her veil. "You do not love her still, you silly boy?"

"When a true love ends as mine has done, best scoff at and disavow it. I have no wish to see her more, Miss Kerr."

"Call me Amy, as you used to do in the pleasant days at Kingsmuir and Kershope."

"I thank you for your kind courtesy, Amy," replied Julian, with a trembling voice. "As for Kate, it was difficult for one weak girl to withstand the energies and influence of father and mother."

"Combined with her own ambition."

"And my obscurity."

"But time has healed your wound," said Amy, sweetly bending her blue eyes into his.

"Right—I can hear her name, and think of her, without the least emotion now."

The thoughts that were passing in Amy's mind rendered her timid and confused; thus their conversation was disjointed, with many a pause.

"I wonder when we shall meet again Julian," said she.

“ When ? ”

“ In society, I mean.”

“ Never more, Amy,” said Julian, with a bitter laugh.

“ Don’t say so Julian—you do not care perhaps ? ”

“ To live—certainly not ! ”

The girl sighed, and her white fingers toyed with some flowers she had brought him.

“ Of what use is life to such as I am ? But for Gerard’s sake, I should rather die ! ”

He never thought of her, and in her secret heart she was loving him more and more !

“ It is wrong of me to visit you, I know, even when escorted by that old lady,” said she ; “ but then you are so ill ! ”

“ And friendless, that you have my double gratitude.”

“ We were great friends in the past time, Julian, were we not ? ” asked the girl, with a sob in her white throat.

“ Ah, yes, Amy.”

“ Julian,” she exclaimed abruptly, “ you have refused many gifts proffered by the Countess—by Kate ? ”

"They degrade me."

"Julian—for the past—the dear past, let me assist you," said Amy, as her tears fell fast, and she added, nervously, "I have been working a purse for you—will you take it?"

"Yes—but a purse is a useless thing to me, Amy."

"But not its contents. Here, Julian, are a hundred sovereigns—take them, and you will repay me when you can—do not refuse me; my allowance is most ample."

Scarcely knowing what to do or say, the girl was so nervous, so tearful and earnest, he put the purse in his breast, and tears started to his eyes, as he kissed the delicate hand, which trembled as his lips touched it, and for the first time he felt all the subtle witchery of her manner—as for her genuine goodness of heart, he always knew that of old.

Thinking she had gained a great point by his acceptance of her loan—she dared not speak of it as a present—Amy became more merry in manner, yet rather nervously so, and resolved to bring her successful visit to a conclusion, but ere she went she could not resist some little coquetry.

In the past days, when Kate was present, Amy had but a slender chance of gaining Julian's admiration ; now, as we have said, she had him all to herself. And thus she adopted a succession of pretty attitudes, placing at one time the prettiest of feet in an elegant *bottine* on the fender, and then hid it under her skirt as his eye caught it. Anon, she complained of a slight headache, took off her hat and replaced it, then she undid her necklet and brooch, with the silver crest of the Kerrs, a unicorn's head ; this necessitated the opening of her jacket, and much nimble business was done in all the re-arrangements, in showing to great perfection two very lovely hands, such as Julian had not looked on for many a month.

He detected all this, and thought with a smile, as she bade him adieu :

" Poor Amy ! I, poor wretch, am not worth all this artillery ! "

His distrust of women was thawing under Amy's soft influence, for he, young though he was, in common with many men when " thrown over " by one of the sex, was apt to believe them to be all alike ; then Amy was a tie—a link of the past and home, and sweet.

indeed was such a link to one so lonely and friendless, so utterly without kith or kin in the modern Babylon.

He had a craving for sympathy, and she gave it him more than Kate could have done ; moreover, the latter was now associated with the secret thoughts of the great wrong that maddened him. He began to watch for her visits, to count the days that were between them, and the few short minutes that each lasted were like sunshine in his way.

He had known Amy Kerr to be a girl that was ever attractive, accomplished, and graceful, with the charm of fascination in all she said and did.

Touched to the soul at last by the girl's great kindness, by her sweetly modulated and sympathetic voice, which brought back the dear days of home and childhood, in his present weakness, the tears rolled unbidden over his pale cheeks on one occasion ; he could scarcely have told why.

"Poor Julian ! poor Julian !" said Amy, wiping them away with her soft perfumed handkerchief.

"Give me this to keep in memory of you

and of to day," said he, as he, placed it in his breast; and again the girl's heart began to beat lightly, and the incident became a perilous crisis for both.

After a pause she said, "And what do you mean to do when you are well and strong, Julian? I have a right to ask: we are such old friends, you know," she added, nervously.

"I shall leave London, certainly."

"Why?"

"Because to remain here is hopeless."

"But you will leave it for where?"

"Where the wind comes from, or where the winds go to; I know not, Amy."


She grew very, very pale as he said this. Her eyes became suffused with tears, and she turned her face away. Julian regarded her closely with growing interest, and his heart began to throb and quicken as he watched her now, but not for the first time.

Julian, like his brother Gerard, was romantic by nature; but much of the romance had been roughly knocked out of him in London. He had begun to study Amy Kerr, and believed that he was far from indifferent to her; he also believed the girl to be too generous in

soul to value the position wealth gave her over him ; she felt a void in her heart, with all her beauty and the many chances afforded to her by the society in which she moved, and he felt certain, or nearly so, that he might fill that void, but poverty and desperation tied his tongue and fettered even his manner and the very expression of his eyes.

He would think of Amy only as a friend, and one who under sunnier auspices might have been something dearer. It was sweet for the lonely fellow to think that some one so brilliant as Amy might love him for himself alone, though their love might be a hopeless one ; and so he strove to set any idea beyond that on one side, as it were ; but there came a day when it seemed too evident that Amy could come with propriety no more, and that a crisis was brought about.

When those visits, paid as it seemed in charity and humanity quite as much as friendship, ceased, as he knew they must do now, he felt certain that he should never meet her again ; there was much of agony and bitterness in the conviction ; and when she rose, pale and lingeringly, to leave him, his heart



beat quick and his brain burned as they had never done in all the love he had borne Kate, for his love for Kate seemed to have come of propinquity and as a matter of course. His hand trembled as it clasped Amy's, and then—but in what words or terms he never knew—Julian told her that he loved her with all the strength of his soul: hopelessly loved her, he knew, but that he could not part from her for ever, as it too probably seemed, without telling her so; and he implored in return, not her love, it would be too daring to ask that, but her pardon for the avowal.

"Pardon, Julian," said the trembling girl, with downcast eyes; "why ask that of me?"

"Because I have no right to ask your love, dear Amy."

"Julian!" she exclaimed, as she became painfully agitated, and would gladly have hid her face in his breast.

"Amy, could you—do you love me?" he asked now, in spite of himself.

Violently trembling, her bosom heaving, her lips quivering, her face deadly pale, she remained silent.

"Speak dearest, dearest Amy!" urged

Julian, borne utterly away, and clasping each of her hands ; but Amy still hesitated to reply.

There flashed through her mind, even at that moment of delight and pain, with all her love for the speaker, all the doubts she had heard expressed at Kingsmuir of Julian's family, and the kind of cloud that overhung his parentage. She knew his position in the world—his utter helplessness and poverty ; and the girl, all unselfish though she was by nature, and aware that one day she would be her own mistress and the mistress of Kershope, —she knew all these would be hard facts for her parents to consider, and which, proud as they were, like all old landed aristocracy, they would never contemplate with patience.

Nay, they would never pardon them in any way, for she knew that her father was insanely proud of his lineal descent from that John Kerr of the Forest, who was also Lord of Roxburgh in the days of David II. Moreover, she was well aware of how great would have been his indignation had he known of her visits to Julian Melville in such a place, though half under the wing and with the knowledge of her moneyed friend Kate.

Oppressed by all these convictions, she remained trembling and silent, pale and sad.

Julian seemed intuitively to read her thoughts and to know her doubts, her natural fear, and the caution, perhaps wisely enforced by circumstances and society.

"Forgive my presumption," said he, in a faint voice, as his head sank back upon the pillow that propped him in his chair. "I had forgotten myself, Amy ; but I see all and remember all now."

"Another time, Julian—another time—not now—not now," replied Amy, tying her veil tightly to hide her tears. And then she left him in haste, aware that after what had passed she could return no more.

She was full of romance ; and most certainly her parents were not. She felt happy and gratified that Julian loved her, though no success could ever attend their love, and he was far from dissatisfied with himself for having avowed it ; for, desperate though it was, she had neither derided nor repelled him.

But when he took another view of the situation, and saw the gulf placed between them, less by position than by fortune, he regretted the

mad folly of the avowal ; his pride took fire, and he too resolved that they should never meet again.

“ And now to end all this ! ” said Julian, on the following day.

That Amy Kerr loved him still, and, under the influence of soft pity and compassion, loved him more than ever she did in the past time, when he had only eyes for the false Kate, he could not doubt. That she, the heiress of Kershope would give him her hand, if unfettered and free from the influence of others, he did not doubt either. Wilful, proud, impetuous, and impressionable, she might, if she chose, and if he pressed his suit as a genuine fortune-hunter would do—she might wed him still ; but he—*he*, nameless, or with a blot, the bar sinister, as it was deemed, upon him, would never consent to this, and he would never go back, even to his beloved Ettrick again !

“ Where then ? ” thought he ; “ where, matters not. Well, well, ‘ there’s a Providence doth shape our ends, rough-hew them as we may.’ ”

“ Going to leave us, when barely convalescent,” exclaimed the house surgeon, when

Julian announced his resolution of leaving the place. "Nonsense, my friend, you are not out of the wood yet, though I must say that the visits of the young lady and her friend, who seem so interested in you, have done more for you than all the Pharmacopœia."

Despite the friendly advice of the doctor, Julian adhered to his somewhat rash resolution, and prepared to go forth into the world again, repelling all aid, even from those who loved him, and felt a mingled emotion of bitterness and joy as he quitted the sick-room wherein he had spent so many weary and sleepless nights, amid a crowd of fancies and phantoms—forth into the world again, as poor as he was before, with only a shilling or two remaining of poor Spangle's half-sovereign.

The money pressed upon him by Amy Kerr he had sealed up in a little parcel, addressed to her, and it was duly given to Mrs. Funnell the housekeeper, on her first periodical arrival with a basket of grapes and other fruit.

He had gone, no one save himself knew whither, out into the darkness of the future. Neither Amy nor Kate had any means by which to trace or discover him, and bitterly the

former wept, as she thought of the poor pale, handsome fellow, so crushed and battered by evil fortune, whom she might too probably never see again, and of whom she had not a relic, though he had a souvenir of her—the little laced handkerchief; and how long might he be able to possess or treasure it?

CHAPTER IX.

UNDER THE LINDENS.

“YOU speak of love, and to me,” said Salome in her grave sad way, without a smile, or even emotion; “yet you have known me but a very short time.”

“Salome, time enough to learn to love you!” exclaimed Gerard.

“A few weeks; barely so much.”

“I seem to have known you for a lifetime!”

“A fancy!”

“A lover’s fancy, Salome.”

“Yet we are well-nigh, and more than that, must still be, strangers,” she replied, with her sweet sad tone.

“A face like yours has ever been my dream, and in face and form, and even in name, you are the heroine of my novel; and we seem to be both wanderers—Bohemians.”

“I am indeed a wanderer, Gerard,” replied Salome, as a gloom seemed to settle over her low, but broad and beautiful forehead.

"Strengthened by your love, I could remove mountains," he exclaimed.

"Now it is you, not I, who talk wildly; faith may do so, we have been told, but not love, and that I seek not. Some women there are in this world who can do without home, husband, or children."

"You are not one of those, Salome," said Gerard, bending fondly over her.

She was silent.

"You were made for a happy love, Salome," he urged, but she was silent still.

From all this it must be apparent that great progress had, in a short time, been made in the mutual acquaintance of Gerard and Salome; and this took place in the linden grove on the Newberg, which overlooks the pretty and regularly built city of Wiesbaden, and between the stems of the trees, from the rustic sofa on which Gerard and Salome sat, could be seen the winding Rhine, the fertile Rhinegau and Mayence, with its pontoon-bridge, all its spires and the great iron cupola of the Pfarrthurm shining in the sun, and backed by the distant Oldenwald.

In the warm air the bees were humming,

and white and yellow butterflies flitting from flower to flower, and bud to bud ; in the background were dark copses of oak and elm, and overhead was the clear blue sky, flecked with fleecy clouds.

They were in the habit of meeting daily, for neither seemed to have another friend or acquaintance in the ducal city. Gerard had quartered himself at a moderate hotel, and Salome, whose movements seemed all involved in mystery, lodged somewhere—but precisely where or with whom he knew not—at Michelsberg, where the great Jewish synagogue stands near the broad and stately Schwalbacherstrasse.

She soon learned to shun the streets, which were thronged with idlers, and Gerard was only too glad to be her escort in the beautiful walks among the environs, to the ruined castle of Sonnenberg, the chapel on the Newberg, by the wooded path in the valley of the Dam-bach, to the Neun Eichen (or nine oaks), through the beautiful woods of the Platte, where the Rhine can be seen rolling through the plain thirteen hundred feet below, amid thick and leafy groves ; and amid such scenes,

with such a companion, the passion of Gerard ripened fast.

But Salome, though avoiding, as we say, the thoroughfares and promenades of Wiesbaden, speedily became an object of undisguised interest to the many German officers, the "British tourists," and other frequenters of the Cursaal, and loungers in the acacia avenue that leads to the steaming Kochbrunnen. Though many observed, admired, and even followed her, something in her air, her eyes, and expression of face prevented even the most forward from daring to intrude upon her; and she, though evidently quite able to take care of herself, seemed not unwilling to avail herself of the escort of Gerard, and to like his companionship and society—he was so fresh in heart, so high in spirit, single in purpose, and every way so good and true.

When he ventured to speak of love, she more than once threatened that he should see her no more, and when, on each evening, she bade him farewell, with formality, at the corner of Michelsberg, and turned abruptly away towards where the Jewish church stands, there was always something in her manner

that forbade him to question, follow, or watch her, and he had but to content himself with her promise to meet him on the subsequent day.

When the eyes of men followed her with admiration that was sometimes too freely expressed, Gerard was filled with mingled jealousy and indignation.

“Sapprement !” he heard an officer of Hussars say to another, as they passed together slowly near where he and Salome sat, in their favourite place under the lindens, “she is lovely, but not even a professor of physiology could determine her age.”

(This was precisely a puzzle to Gerard.)

“Aye,” said the other, “it will be long before she gives up all hopes of matrimony.”

“I should think so, with that beautiful face and those eyes; and, moreover, when does a woman give up all hope of matrimony?”

“I cannot say, Carl, but I don’t think any woman ever reached that period yet.”

Salome heard this banter, which they did not intend her to do, as they spoke in German, and she smiled more sweetly than sadly.

Gerard's heart was on fire ; but she laid her cool firm hand on his, and led him away.

On all these scenes amid which he wandered with Salome, he knew that his mother's eyes must have rested many times, in the days of her early love for, and faith in, that faithless Lord Hermitage, who had wiled her from her father's roof ; and also, no doubt, in the days of her pain and sorrow, of her desertion, of her supposed shame and consequent despair.

Of the information he had so vaguely hoped to glean at Wiesbaden, he could gather nothing. The embassy had passed away ; Nassau had been absorbed in the German empire, and its Duke resided at Vienna ; even the hotel in the Schutzenhofstrasse, where " Lord and Lady Hermitage " had their apartments, was in process of demolition, and its landlord had gone no one knew whither. Gerard thus ceased to hope for any clue, and abandoned himself to the delight of Salome's society.

He had written to Julian from time to time, at the London address agreed upon, but no answer ever reached him. Could Julian be ill, or had he suddenly left London ? But

Gerard little knew how often his brother had been compelled to change his obscure places of abode, or of the misfortunes that came thick and fast upon him.

How he longed for the time when his brother should see the strange foreign woman whose beauty and grace had so bewildered him. "Salome!" How often he repeated her name when alone, unctuously and with unspeakable tenderness, as if the great passion and great fever of life were embodied in the idea of her.

Yet his love seemed to make no progress with her. Times there were when he thought himself secure of her heart, for she knew that he loved her, and yet she did not coyly avoid him as some women would have done, for she was full of candour.

"Does she indeed care for me, or will she ever do so?" he asked of himself, and could but hope that in time she would learn to do so, to forget her melancholy, and to laugh, for though she often smiled, he had never seen her sweet lips laugh.

"I love you with all my heart, Salome!" he had ventured to say more than once.


"You must *not* talk of love to me," she replied, "or you may lose me."

"Lose you, when I want you to be my wife !"

"You know not what you say."

Then, as other thoughts occurred to him, he would cease to urge his suit for a time ; and, like Julian in his love for Amy, he would think how daring it was to speak of love in circumstances such as his own. Yet it was sweet to feel that he had told her of his passion ; and how sweeter it would be to hear her admit that he was not indifferent to her.

Can she be rich ? thought Gerard, for to him her ample charity to every passing mendicant seemed inexplicable. She was so perfectly self-possessed, so brilliant in her intellect, and so full of varied and out-of-the-way information on every subject, that Gerard felt himself, to use a common phrase, "very small" indeed when with her, and much her inferior in mental capacity ; yet, to his bewilderment, he observed that she never read, nor sang, nor played any instrument ; nor could he make out to what set of Christians, if to any, she belonged.



She had no attendant, friend, chaperon or maid, yet always appeared with her coal-black tresses coiled afresh every day, a pretty band or lace collar round her white and delicate throat; she was always particular about her cuffs, and the bow at her corsage was always prettily selected, and all so perfect.

Now Gerard, ever given to thoughtful and poetic fancies, was one of those persons, who are often to be met with in Scotland and in Germany, who hold to the theory that it is given to a few the power of discerning supernatural things and forms, and he actually believed Salome to be one of these, or else that she might suddenly have become endowed with the power, so singular were the remarks she let fall, casually, when in conversation.

One day, when seated under the gigantic oak-tree near the Chaussée Haus, from where the vast valley of the Rhine can be seen stretched out like a map at one's feet, with the Bergstrasse on one hand and the summits of the Donnersberg on the other, she suddenly said:

"It was not love of travel that brought you here, Gerard."

"How know you that?"

"I know many things, and may easily know that."

Gerard thought of his mother's story; he coloured deeply and remained silent. To him it was often a source of wonder and perplexity, not unmixed with pleasure and the hope that she was closely observing him, to find that she was able to anticipate or actually read his thoughts, ere they took the form of words; but greatly was this emotion increased on that day near the Chaussée Haus.

"I know not what you seek in Wiesbaden, Salome," said he, laughingly, and attempting to take her hand; "but evidently it is not pleasure."

"Neither do you; it is not pleasure, and it was not, as I have said, love of travel."

"How can you know that, Salome?"

"Because I know otherwise, and the cause that actually brought you hither."

"You—you do?"

"Yes, Gerard."

"It is impossible; my object is known to myself alone."

"And to me. You came to find some

proof of your mother's marriage to one who cruelly deceived her."

"How, in the name of Heaven, are you aware of this?" he asked in breathless astonishment.

"Do not thus lightly appeal to Heaven for that which appertains to Earth, and Earth alone."

"My mother is in Heaven."

"I hope so."

"Well, well, Salome, such was my vague, most vague object—well-nigh forgotten since that night we met at Zevenaar; as for the proofs——"

"You will find none here."

"Where, then?" he asked impetuously.

"In the land you came from."

"England?"

"No."

"Scotland, then?"

"Yes—and such proofs do exist."

"Oh, Salome, how can you know that? Have you dreamed all this, or gathered my object and my hopes from any words of mine?"

"I may have done both," said she, with her

soft unfathomable expression of eye. "In time, I shall tell you all—not now."

Gerard for a time was silent, bewildered, awed, and something of a strange clamorous fear was mingling with his love now and almost stifling it, till he raised his eyes again and looked on her beautiful face.

"Oh, Salome, Salome," he exclaimed, and would have thrown an arm round her, but she drew back with a gesture that repelled him. "May I love you?" he added, with his hands clasped.

"Yes," said she, rising from her seat.

"May I hope?"

"Hope for nothing—so far as I am concerned."

"But, if you permit me to love you, may not I hope that you will yet be mine?"

"I will explain all this to you in time; but yours I may never be, Gerard, and if I dismiss you——"

"I should die!"

"No—I know better than that; but attempt not to seek me."

"Why?"

"Because you shall do so in vain."

Gerard felt a kind of conviction that to say more than might imperil his future. Her real or pretended knowledge of his purpose confounded him, and still more was he fated to be puzzled by a few brief subsequent events.

As they walked homeward by the wooded path that led towards the city, a fair-haired and handsome young officer of Uhlans passed. He was walking slowly in the opposite direction, with a tasselled Dresden china merschaum in his mouth. On beholding Salome it fell to the ground, as a half-uttered exclamation of astonishment escaped him, and he grew deadly pale; but he raised his hand to his cap and passed on in nervous haste, while Salome looked actually startled.

"Does he know you?" said Gerard with a jealous pang.

"Yes—we have met," replied Salome quietly.

"Here in Wiesbaden?"

"No, in Berlin."

"And who is he?"

"Baron Sonnenberg, a noble of Nassau."

"I have heard the title before."

"He takes it from the now ruined castle of that name, near Wiesbaden."

Gerard walked on in silence, oppressed by a tumult of thought, and striving to remember where or when he had heard the name of the Baron before ; and he parted from Salome as usual at Michelsberg, without referring to the subject.

CHAPTER X.

IN THE CURSAAL AGAIN.

GERARD felt a sense of mingled jealousy and regret that anyone should have known, and, he doubted not, should have loved Salome before him ; and, more than all, had too probably made his love known to her, thus procuring a certain amount of—at least—interest in her eyes ; else, whence her startled manner ?—the first emotion he had ever seen her display.

He remarked, also, from that moment until he parted with her, that she had a pre-occupation of manner, and a certain sad, far-seeing expression in her eyes, which he failed then to comprehend.

“Like Julian,” thought he, “I am not fated to be happy in my first love !”

The reason why Gerard wrote so seldom to Julian now was because of this very love for Salome ; and why he never mentioned her

was that she seemed to him so indescribable, so difficult to depict on paper—especially within the brief compass of a letter—a beautiful enigma.

All that had passed between them that day made him most unhappy, for perplexity of any kind is an awkward adjunct to a fit of love, such as that which possessed Gerard, and certainly in the words and manner of Salome, and the whole general tenor of her way, there were much to harass and confuse him, and to fill him with alarm and anxiety even for her sanity.

To fly from his own thoughts—for when not with her he usually sought solitude—on this evening he turned into the Cursaal, the same Cursaal where his mother had come face to face with the fair little Baroness of Sonnenberg (oh ! now he remembered the name, and knew that he must have seen her son) ; and he hoped amid its many and varied gaieties to find something to soothe or lure him from reflection.

The whole edifice was ablaze with gas-lights, and filled with visitors of both sexes; the crash of a German military band was heard

in one hall, for the dancers ; in another an orchestral performance and concert were in full progress ; without the building, the cascades and jets d'eau were being illuminated, with an effect almost magical in the dark, for underneath the tiers of marble basins, gas jets have been introduced, which when lighted burst into a thousand tongues of flame, reflected in, and glittering through, a veil of falling water.

Through the ball-room, which was crowded with dancers, through the gambling and conversation rooms—where in the former *trente et quarante* with *roulette* were in full progress, and in the latter many flirtations were proceeding—he wandered aimlessly, a stranger and unknown to all, till he found himself in the gallery of the great iron verandah, which runs the whole length of the stately Curhaus, and is so gay with statues and gigantic flowering plants in tubs and vases of every shape.

The verandah and the gallery were both comparatively empty ; but as Gerard looked down upon the long and brilliantly lighted vista of the former, how great was his astonishment to see Salome seated on a sofa, quite alone, and leisurely fanning herself—for the evening was

close—with a black feather fan, the silver spangles of which glittered bright as her own eyes with every motion she made.

In haste he was about to descend, when he saw an officer of Uhlans approach and join her—the same officer whose appearance had that day disturbed her, Konrad, Baron of Sonnenberg, the son of the *petite* and fragile Baroness, who had been the too successful rival of poor Gladys in the past time. What sought he with Salome, and why was she so disturbed by his approach? Gerard shrank back. Was he now to be crossed in his love by the son of her who wronged his mother and robbed her of a husband?

The undoubted mystery that seemed to envelope Salome, her antecedents and her present movements and character generally, made his love for her, if a delight, also a species of torment now; she was, in every way, so unlike any other woman he had met or conceived, save in her beauty, and so far as his luckless romance was concerned.

Gerard felt himself blush at the idea of acting eavesdropper; but there was a peculiarity in their greeting that rooted him to the spot.

If he moved to withdraw, he must infallibly have caught the eyes of Salome and the young Baron; if he remained, he would be unseen between two great flowering shrubs in majolica vases. He had offered the most passionate love to Salome without any appearance of success; he had, he feared, barely succeeded in creating an interest in her heart, and he thought he might now discover, though the fact must excite his distress and dismay, what better progress another had made with her—another, whom he greatly feared she had come by pre-arrangement to meet in that place, of all places in the world so unlikely for her—the gay and dissipated Cursaal.

Added to all this, there was her mysterious knowledge of the purpose that brought him, ostensibly, to Wiesbaden, and the secret of his mother's wrongs. Could Sonnenberg have given her a clue? The idea made his blood boil, till reflection showed the folly of such a supposition, as the Baron knew not of his existence, perhaps, till that day.

"Salome," said the latter, approaching reverentially, with his cap in his hand, at the touch of which she started as if a wasp had

stung her. This did not look like any pre-arrangement; but it was the greatest amount of emotion Gerard had ever seen her display, and hence it keenly excited his interest. That one so self-possessed and unimpressible as Salome should exhibit any emotion at all was unusual; it excited the surprise of Gerard, and—as before, in the wooded walk of the *Chausée Haus*—his jealousy.

Can we wonder that he lingered to overlook—if not to overhear—what passed, when all his future seemed to depend upon her he loved so well? However, all that passed served to increase, not his jealousy, but his perplexity.

“Salome,” said the Uhlan, softly and rapturously, “at last we meet again!”

“And for the last time, I hope.”

“Do not say so. In what part of Wiesbaden are you resident?”

“Why ask?”

“Because I have some right to know.”

“No human being has any right to be concerned in my movements. You forget yourself, Baron.”

“Would to Heaven I could forget you!”



said the young man, sadly ; “and this Englishman, or Scotsman, or whatever he is, who dangles about with you daily ——”

“ Well ! ”

“ He can see, no doubt, how beautiful you are, but he knows not how pitiless you can be.”

“ Poor boy—poor boy ! He loves me—yes ; but he knows not *what* or *who* it is he loves.”

“ Has this folly gone on long ? ” asked the Baron, gloomily.

“ It is nothing to you.”

“ It is much ! ” he exclaimed impetuously, attempting to take her hand.

“ Dare you touch me ? ” she asked, with her most queenly air.

“ Salome,” said he reproachfully, “ have you forgotten the little flower-bordered path that leads to the margin of the Havel, and the lovely sunset we saw there together ? ”

“ I have not,” said she, calmly fanning herself, “ though I care not to remember it.”

“ Why, Salome ? ”

“ Because of the folly of which you were guilty there.”

“ In telling you that which you knew well before—that I loved you ? ”

“ Yes.”

“ You know, Salome, that I only waited for a favourable opportunity to carry you off and marry you.”

“ Yes—you left the latter part to follow the former.”

“ What do you mean ? ”

“ To carry me off and marry me after. Let us end this perilous nonsense ! ” she added, looking impatiently around her.

“ I had to consult an intriguing mother and an ambitious father, who knew you not—you——”

“ Had no human being to consult,” said Salome, in a voice full of great pathos, “ and even had I a thousand, your proposals to me were madness. Go, go—and let us part to meet no more.”

He eyed her almost vindictively, and, after a pause, said:

“ Can there be truth in the terrible maxim of Rochefoucauld, that it is quite possible for a virtuous woman to have had only one lover ; but that there never was a woman who had more than one, and then stopped, for their number then becomes like x in algebra.”

“ And what is that ? ”

“ An unknown quantity.”

A shade of pity rather than anger crossed the face of Salome.

“ So, so—you have as little pity for me as for my poor brother, who shot himself at Berlin for the love of you, saying that your eyes had all the fatal fascination of those of the basilisk.”

“ But that we may not deface the temple in which God places the human soul, I would take some means to destroy this fatal beauty of which you speak. To me it is a curse ! ”

“ Then, Salome, you never, never loved me ? ” said the young man sadly.

“ Did I ever seem to affect that I did so ? ”

“ No—you were ever cruel—cruel ! My words are like fire, but they fall on ice that will not melt. Oh, that we had never met, or that I could learn to hate you.”

“ Do not say so,” replied Salome, in touching accents ; “ I have done too much—too much—in my time, God knows, to deserve the hatred of the good and pure.”

“ That is your terrible—your inscrutable—secret ? ”

“ Yes.”

"Oh, Salome, we have made a life-long mistake."

"You may have done so, like all who are mad enough to love me."

"The future——"

"I have a future, a long, long and terrible one," said she in a low piercing voice, while a shudder passed over her delicate form; "you have none—none, at least, compared with mine! Go—leave me and forget me."

To Gerard all this sounded very like tragic raving, and it was quite calculated to fill him with alarm and sorrow. He was about to withdraw at any risk, when Salome suddenly looked up, and beckoned him to come to her by a wave of her fan; the action was done calmly and quietly, as if she cared not what he might have overheard, and, as she did so, the young Baron bowed and withdrew.

"Salome," said Gerard, as she rose and took his arm; "you here—you at the Cursaal?"

"As you see."

"Do you wish to dance?"

"Oh, no, no."

"Why, Salome?"

"I danced once—once too often; but that was long, long ago, and since then I have never danced again," she replied, with one of her far-seeing and unfathomable expressions of eye.

Gerard thought this referred perhaps to some reminiscence of Berlin, and the suicide of which he had just heard.

"Does the music not invite you?" he asked.

"Not that of the ball-room—but hark to the concert."

"What is being sung?"

"The chorus of Death," said Salome, and a brighter smile spread over her face than he had ever seen there before.

"If not for amusement, why did you come here?" asked Gerard, eyeing her with growing anxiety.

"I came to meet you—I had a thorough conviction that you would be here."

"But you met the young Baron?" said Gerard, as his eyes lighted up with joy at her words.

"That I could not help."

"And, darling, you came to meet me?" he exclaimed in a voice full of tenderness.

"Yes—but only to tell you that which I

know you will be sorry to hear—I must leave Wiesbaden.”

“Why—oh, why?” asked Gerard, growing as pale as herself,

“Because that man has found me out, and will persecute me, for he is not loving, gentle, and good, as you are; and for another reason more cogent still—my life, my fate, does not permit me to stay very long anywhere,” she added, with intense sadness and weariness of tone and expression of eye. “But let us go; the night is becoming chilly.”

With intense sorrow—actual consternation—Gerard heard her make this announcement; and these emotions were greatly increased by the calm resolution of her manner, and the determination she avowed of keeping him in ignorance of the exact time of her departure and of all her future movements.

She promised, however, to meet him as usual on the morrow, but at a more sequestered spot, near the Jewish cemetery. She would not permit him to escort her home, but took a droski in the Theaterplatz, at the back of the Cursaal, gave him her ungloved hand to kiss, and drove away to Michelsberg.

That night Gerald lay long sleepless and restless on his pillow. He had, indeed, much to think about and ponder over. If she could tell him—which he could scarcely believe to be possible—*where* the proofs of his mother's marriage lay in Scotland, then had his impulsive journey to Wiesbaden not been in vain ; but to love her as he did, and to lose her—to lose all her sweet companionship—was a torture to contemplate.

His beautiful enigma was becoming more enigmatical ; but a time was coming when he was to have a clue, or a species of clue, to it all.

CHAPTER XI.

THE SECRET CHAMBER.

ON the following day Gerard was filled with double anger against the young Baron of Sonnenberg, as the cause of Salome's sudden resolution to leave Wiesbaden ; and it was fortunate he did not meet the Uhlan, as in his present mood he might too readily have taken up the feud of their mothers.

On this day he resolved to put his love affair with Salome to the final test, now and for ever ! He hastened to the place where Salome had appointed to meet him, near the Israelitisher-Friedhof, on the slope of a wooded hill north-eastward of the town ; beyond the road that leads to Sonnenberg, feeling as he went that it would be impossible for him to relinquish her society, her sweet companionship, though he could scarcely, under their mutual circumstances, foresee the end of it ;

but whithersoever she went, he resolved that he would follow her, rather than relinquish hope, and with it, her.

He was at the trysting-place—a pathway, bordered by pretty and feathery acacia trees—long before the appointed time, and to his delight found Salome already awaiting him there.

She received him with great sweetness of manner ; but looking sadder even than was her wont, she said :

“ I feel that I am doing wrong in coming hither to meet you now, though most probably for the last time.”

“ Oh, Salome ! ” exclaimed Gerard, as he took her hand.

“ But I have a great regard for you, Gerard ; yes, one as strong as it is in my unfortunate nature to have for anyone. Yet,” she added, arresting a caressing gesture, “ do not mistake me ; it is not the emotion, with which you seek to inspire me, or with which you are yourself inspired.”

“ Are you still in the mood to leave Wiesbaden ? ”

“ Still—that is irrevocable ! ”

"I shall follow you to the end of the earth, Salome!"

"I shall pass out of your existence as completely as if you had never known me," she replied deliberately.

"Do not talk in this strange fashion," exclaimed Gerard; then in a low and passionate tone he said, "Salome, I ask you, for the second time, will you be my wife, and let me share or soothe the secret sorrow that too evidently oppresses you?"

"No—no—no! Do not ask me," she replied, shivering as if with cold while she spoke, though the noon sunshine was bright and warm. "Poor foolish Gerard, you know not whom you speak to, as I have before told you, or whose love you crave."

"I love you dearly, Salome," said Gerard, in a voice that trembled with emotion; "and all my life——"

"Your future life, you mean?"

"Yes, of course—depends upon a word or two from you."

"And these words?"

"Are—I love you!"

Would that *my* future depended on a

tenure so frail ! ” she exclaimed, as the weird, far-seeing expression came into her beautiful dark eyes.

“ Your future, Salome ? ”

“ Is known to God alone ! ”

“ Would that I were certain that mine should be interwoven with it ! ”

Salome, whose sad eyes had been fixed on the ground, now bent them with grave pity on Gerard.

“ You know not what you talk of,” said she, pressing her white hands on her temples, as if to stay their throbbing; “ but learn this—that the sins and crimes of the past make that future fearful to contemplate ! ”

“ Crimes—sins ! ” repeated Gerard, in a broken voice, and certainly with a somewhat scared expression of face.

“ Oh, Heaven ! ” she exclaimed, with an emotion that was wonderfully deep and earnest for her, as the general tenor of her way was still and placid, “ how long is this life to endure ? ”

“ I care not in what you have been involved, Salome,” said Gerard, taking her hands in his caressingly, “ you, I know are pure and sinless ; and even were it otherwise,

I have no ties—the world is a wide place, and we can make our home where we will, and wherever you may choose to forget the past, and all connected with it, as completely as if it had never been, in our new and happy home.”

His eyes filled as he spoke, and he held her hands closely within his own, as if to evince how he would hold and protect her, if he could.

“A home! I cannot realise the idea.”

“Yes, Salome, a home, where your wishes would be law, and our rule the rule of love—your resting-place for life.”

“And then in the fulness of time to die!” she exclaimed, with a strange gloomy rapture in her tone, and while a wistful expression he could not analyse stole into her face, which became white as marble. “But enough of this, Gerard—for your own sake, I would that I had never met you; but a power beyond our control cast us in each other’s way. Many—oh, how many—have said to me all that you have done; many to whom my beauty—for I know that I possess beauty—has proved a curse, a snare, a source of final destruction—death of the body, perhaps of the soul! So do not talk of love; for years far beyond what you have any con-

ception of, I have had but one thought : when will Heaven in its mercy let me die."

As she spoke, with her dark eyes fixed apparently on some great vacancy beyond human ken, a Jewish funeral, that of a young person apparently, passed by them on its way to the Friedof of the Israelites. It had evidently come from the Michelsberg quarter, and the chief Rabbi was in attendance. They stood up, and Gerard uncovered his head as the gloomy little procession passed. The Rabbi bowed to Salome, according her a deep reverence. He then looked markedly, and with some interest, at Gerard.

"Do you know him, Salome?" asked the latter, after a pause.

"He evidently knows *me*," was her curious answer, as the procession disappeared within the walls of the cemetery. At that moment Gerard saw in the face of his companion a hopelessness of grief that pained him more than the wildest despair could have done. What could all this mystery mean? Anon she smiled bitterly, and said, "Death! oh, there is nothing terrible in it. In my time I have seen many, oh, so many, make super-

human efforts to save their lives from fire and shipwreck, or other perils, and yet perish, in this world at least. Others I have known seek death and fail to find it. How often have I longed for it, yet death never comes to me ! ”

“ Salome,” exclaimed Gerard, with increasing pain and perplexity, for he had never before seen her so excited, “ can your life have been so terrible, so sad, your story so unexampled ? All this sounds and seems incredible to me,” he added, with clasped hands, as he drew back in fear, and eyed her anxiously.

“ Oh, folly of the heart ! ” she said, in a low tone, as if communing with herself ; “ how often, how often, oh, my God ! how many, many times, have I thought of—yea, and dreamed of a grave covered with soft green turf, and spotted, it might be, with wild flowers—a grave never to be disturbed.”

“ For whom ? for whom ? ” he exclaimed.

“ Myself ! ”

“ Is this madness or blasphemy ? ” thought Gerard, as his blood began to chill.

“ I am *not* mad, Gerard,” said she, sadly and quietly.

"I did not speak, Salome."

"But you *thought*!"

"Heaven, Salome, can you read one's thoughts?"

"In the faces of some, I can."


"It is sinful to wish oneself dead," said he, taking her hand; "let us leave this place; the gloom of those cypresses and the episode of the funeral have disturbed you. Allow me to lead you elsewhere."

"As you please," said she, and they began to descend the hill towards where the white streets of the city lay steeped in golden haze and sunshine; but Gerard, though he had come resolved, as we have said, to put her love to the final test—in the words of Montrose's beautiful song, to gain or lose it all—spoke no more of it then. The dread that her brain was unsettled filled him with great pity—yea, made his blood run cold, and repressed his yearning passion and desire to soothe her chronic and remarkable grief. He was very sad, very silent, and almost feared to think, lest his thoughts might be known to her. But a time was coming when all these strange, wild, and apparently incoherent speeches of

Salome were to dwell more painfully in the memory of the startled Gerard, and a subsequent episode, ere the day was done, added greatly to his wonder and perplexity.

In proceeding through the streets, while escorting her as usual towards the Michelsberg quarter, but silently, and in abstraction, when passing the now abandoned ducal palace in the market-place (a somewhat stately edifice, having on its front a long balcony, supported by a colonnade of pillars, and two long three-storied wings, adjoining its central mass), a guard of Uhlans, dismounted, but carrying their heavy lances, appeared at the entrance porch ; and, as the public are never admitted after one P.M., it was with some surprise that Gerard observed a considerable crowd and much bustle about the place, and many persons thronging in and out, with wonder and excitement expressed in their faces, and in their hoarse German utterances.

That morning a strange discovery had been made, a few hours before. During certain repairs or alterations in the new palace, which had been built, or engrafted on an older edifice, for Duke William of Nassau, about 1840,



after a plan drawn by the famous Moller, of Darmstadt, the workmen had to break up a door, which led they knew not whither; a door which had been concealed by a coating of plaster, and as it gave way beneath their hammers and axes, crashing down amid a cloud of dust, a singular sight presented itself.

Beyond lay a saloon, or large apartment, a portion of the older edifice, but the existence of which was unknown, and the then walled-up windows of which had once opened to the Market Strasse, which adjoins Michelsberg; and on lights being procured by the workmen, they entered with loud exclamations of astonishment, and ere long the Burgomaster and other officials came.

The chamber was pronounced to be one that had evidently been unentered since the days of the terrible fire which ravaged Wiesbaden in the middle of the sixteenth century, destroying the whole town, with the exception of the castle and a few houses.


Those who entered now, came upon no grisly or noisome sight, though evidently expecting it; no skeleton, in armour or otherwise, lay there, but the room seemed the very abode

of long departed splendour. On the long table, half buried under dust, lay the vessels and remains of what had once been a feast ; at its head stood a stately chair of state, on which could still be traced, as on the ceiling and elsewhere, the ducal arms of Nassau, a shield sprinkled with crosses argent, with the lion gules, and other quarterings, over which hung the blackened rags of a velvet canopy.

The carpet and tapestries had been long since devoured into holes by armies of rats ; dust and mould obscured the paintings that hung on the walls, and the crystal chandeliers, the slings of which had long since given way, had fallen crashing on the table and on the chairs, strewing showers of crystal over all the place ; while in one corner stood a harp, the strings of which could have emitted no sound for several generations.

How the place had been forgotten, or why it had been walled up, of what crime or tragedy it had been the scene, were conjectured by all in vain !

Baron Sonnenberg, who commanded the Uhlan guard, on seeing Salome and her companion, without exhibiting either jealousy or



emotion—the young man was too well bred to have done so—politely invited them to see this mysterious chamber, which was now the wonder of all Wiesbaden, and they entered accordingly, with many other visitors, full of curiosity. Gerard felt the latter keenly; but Salome was calm, languid, and seemed totally indifferent for a time, surveying the place with a quiet, vague smile.

“You seem surprised by the discovery of this chamber,” said she, in response to some exclamation of Gerard’s.

“Not more than others,” he replied; “but it must have some strange, perhaps terrible story.”

“Every old house, Gerard—every rock, even—could it speak, might tell the world some romance or history evolved out of the lives of those who dwelt there of old; so could every old tree, for the matter of that; for even an old tree is a record of the days, the years, and people who have passed away since it was a sapling.”

“And you feel no surprise or interest in this, Salome?”

“Surprise—no; interest—perhaps. I have

been here before, Gerard," said she in a low voice.

"In this palace?"

"Yes, in this room."

"This room, which has only just been discovered, and which the people assert cannot have been known of, or entered, since the great fire that occurred generations ago! Oh, Salome, you rave, or seek only to perplex and distress me."

"I do not rave, Gerard; neither do I seek to perplex you," she said gently. "See to the proof," she added, as if to him alone, and oblivious of those about them.

She approached a lofty piece of carved panelling, apparently built into the wall; and selecting a knob like a lion's head, with very little effort, she pushed it on one side, disclosing a little iron handle. She pressed the latter, and then two panels unclosed slowly, as if on hinges long unused, displaying the damp and mildewed portrait of a beautiful woman, of Salome herself—Salome to the life, even to the tiny flesh-mark on her upper lip!

"If not here before, Gerard," said she "how should I have known of this secret picture?"

An artist painted it of me for the Duke of Nassau ; but I knew not that another hand had since painted beside the figure that horrible head ! ” she added, while an expression of the most profound distress and dismay overspread her pallid face, as she saw that in her hand on the panel there had been depicted a black and grisly human head, the dark curly locks of which her white fingers seemed to grasp.

“ Sapprement ! ” exclaimed young Sonnenberg, as the bowl of his meerschaum again dropped from his moustachioed lip ; “ the picture is you, line for line—what can all this mean ? ”

Now something of genuine horror spread over the fair young face of Gerard, and Salome seemed to detect it with real pain. Was this woman, whom he loved so fondly, mad or something more than human ? He reeled, almost senseless, against the wall, and would have fallen, had not Sonnenberg caught his arm.

When he recovered, and looked about him, the panels had been restored, the fatal picture was hidden, and Salome was gone ; she had left the place.

When Gerard issued into the street, just as the noisy public were being finally expelled by the Uhlans, the long line of gas-lamps was beginning to glitter in the Lang-gasse, as he made his way to his hotel, reeling like a drunken man, scarcely knowing what to think, sick at heart, and marvelling whether he was the victim of some German diablerie, or whether his senses were leaving him.

She was gone, with no promise to meet him on the morrow, and, sooth to say, at that precise time he scarcely wished to do so.

Gone !

When was he, if ever, to see that perilously beautiful face again ?

CHAPTER XII.

A FAREWELL LETTER.

GERARD passed a feverish and sleepless night, his heart filled by a kind of clamorous anxiety and apprehension, difficult alike to describe or explain. He vainly strove to court sleep, yet there came not even a passing voice to disturb him. The hotel in which he resided was in the quietest part of the suburbs, and the night was very silent—deathly so, save those strange and sometimes unearthly or inexplicable sounds that are heard amid the darkness when all others are still.

Again and again he asked of himself was that mysterious woman, who, concerning herself and her actions, had always said too much or too little, doomed to be the ruling influence, the guiding star for good or evil, of all his future life ?

In questioning himself thus, the dreamer forgot how few his own years were as yet, or

what his future life might be. He could but stare into the darkness, and ponder on the sweet simplicity, the charming candour, the clear, honest and beautiful eyes that were wont to look back without fear or blench into his, while her tongue softly gave utterance, almost casually, to admissions and references that made his heart chill with alarm.

But where was she now, and with whom?

With morning the *brief-trager* of the hotel brought him a letter in a female hand, and his heart leaped as he opened it, as he knew it must be from her, and was the first she had ever written him.

Its contents were brief, and as bewildering as herself, and calculated to excite alarm, surprise, and even jealous anger. There were no expressions of regret for abruptly leaving him alone, nor of pity for the hopeless love she had excited; not one of love in return, or any attempt to elucidate the mystery that seemed to surround her. It was cold—so much so that his thoughts reverted angrily to young Sonnenberg—and in some places apparently incoherent.

“When you read these lines, Gerard, I shall

be miles away from you and Wiesbaden. After your rash declarations of love, and my unwitting revelation of yesterday, is it fitting that we should meet again? Oh, no—and I am sure that by this time even you will, on reflection, agree with me. Remember what I said to you once before: seek not to follow or attempt to discover me, for you shall do so in vain.

“I have again begun those aimless wanderings, the end of which I cannot foresee. Would to God that I could!

“‘Day and night my toils redouble!

Never nearer to the goal;

Never—never does the trouble

Of the wanderer leave my soul.’

“Be joyful, Gerard, that I have at last left you, never, never to meet you again. Poor youth, who thought to cast his lot in life with *me*! No human being is capable of understanding the misery of my fate, the secret of my life—a friendless, restless, and homeless one—a being from whom all learn to shrink in time, whom even Death himself eludes; for a thousand times in vain have I flung myself in the path of peril, only to find that flames

spared, waves repelled me, and that steel became blunted on my bosom."

"Oh, what raving is all this?" thought poor Gerard, and again an emotion of aching or sickness of the heart came over him.

"Gerard," the letter continued, in a clear and steady hand, "Heaven has set a seal—yea, imposed a curse upon me: but enough of all this. The maker of Heaven and Earth, and of all things *visible and invisible*, alone can help me when the time comes; till then I can—as I have already told you—but envy the dead.

"That I have secret powers and perceptions beyond most people, my knowledge of the object that vaguely brought you to Wiesbaden—an object half forgotten by you in the fatal charm of my society—may serve to convince you; if other occasions, on which I could read your inmost thoughts, have failed to do so."

Then her letter proceeded to tell him that in his native land—the land from which he had so recently come—the proofs he wished to possess of his mother's marriage could alone be found; and she described, with a

minuteness and distinctness that made Gerard actually tremble with astonishment, the house of Uriah Grippie, the mean and sordid country lawyer, in the obscure south-country town of Dumfries, beside the Nith—a quaint old dwelling, above the door of which was carved in stone the legend—one of those so common on the doors of old Scottish houses—“*Deus Benedicite*, 1600.” In a panelled room thereof, the window of which overlooked the river, there was a secret recess, to which access was given by pressing a knob carved in the form of a lion’s head, exactly like that she had handled yesterday in the ducal palace; and therein he would find all he wanted.

“Remember what I have written—commit to memory, or keep, my letter,” she added.

“Keep your letter—keep your letter!” exclaimed Gerard in a strange voice, as he kissed it; and yet could not add “my darling,” in the alarm and sorrow the whole tenor of the missive excited.

“How I came to know all this—a most trivial matter to me—I cannot explain to you, Gerard, for I lack the power to do so,” she continued; “yet I am neither a real

sorceress nor a mock one ; but a most unhappy creature, who seeks not the occult powers that are given her. Suffice that I knew it all on that night we crossed the Rhine together."

Then she blessed him, and bade him adieu, and so closed her letter, in all of which there was a vast amount of food for bewildering thought. His heroine bore her name ; her idea had ever haunted him. Then there was his impulse to seek Wiesbaden, the result of which was to throw him in her way ; her knowledge of his secret object ; her minute description of the distant place in which lay the proofs of the marriage of his ill-fated mother.

"Heaven !" thought he, "if all this should be true," while his heart leaped at the idea, and sped home to his brother Julian, of whose fate he was, as yet, blissfully ignorant—Julian, who might yet be the Lord Hermitage !

From whatever source her knowledge came—mesmerism, spirit-rapping, or some of those keen perceptions experienced by those whose highly wrought nervous organisations enabled them to see the odic light, as he had read in the magnetic and electric works of Ashburner

and Carl Von Reichenbach, out-Heroding the half-frenzied speculations of over-strained science—he resolved to act upon the information her letter accorded to him.

If true, the sequel could but add to his wonder.

If false, he was no worse than before ; and that it should be so, seemed to be more in the order of Nature.

“Homeless and a constant wanderer,” thought Gerard, “how does she find food and raiment ? Surely we shall meet again some time—the world is, proverbially, a small place, after all. I feel sure that we shall—but to what end—to what end ?”

Gerard the dreamer had now met with something beyond the most poetical of his dreams, the wildest imaginings of a mind first fostered and developed in that realm of song and wild legend, the Rhinns of Galloway.

Ever and anon came the harrowing suggestion, Was her mind, perhaps occasionally, if not permanently, warped in some manner ? Else, whence all these incoherences and strange assertions ? Was it in consequence of her, or of some crime in which she had been concerned

in years past, that the newly-discovered chamber—with the story of which all Wiesbaden was ringing, and the columns of the *Wiesbadener Tagblatt* and the *Rhein Kurier* were filled—had been walled up and forgotten ?

Then he thrust aside the question as too outrageous to be entertained for a moment, and as adopting for truth the assertion she had made amid the old crumbling splendour of the palace.

Yet whence her knowledge of the concealed portrait, the portrait of herself ? And also, whence her occult knowledge of the secret in that old house beside the Nith ?

Mechanically he refolded her singular letter and put it carefully apart in his pocket-book, only to draw it out again for re-perusal ; and then he sat long with his arms resting on the table, his head resting on his hands, and an untasted breakfast before him, not knowing what to think, but feeling somewhat stunned, as well he might.

So passed the day—the first of their separation.

Of one thing he felt distinctly conscious : that to all his most tender and earnest avowals

of love and affection she had never made the slightest response, but had either repelled them, or heard them only with her sad pitying smile; and this fact he remembered with something of anger when he heard, incidentally, that the gay young Uhlan, Konrad, the Baron of Sonnenberg, had suddenly disappeared from Wiesbaden on the morning of Salome's departure.

This might be a coincidence, but Gerard was in a mood of mind to make the worst of everything.

Suddenly he bethought him of her friend, or acquaintance, the Jewish Rabbi, the only person whom she seemed to know in Wiesbaden. He might be able to throw some light upon her character, even her movements, and be able to say whither she had turned her wandering footsteps.

Ever a creature of sudden impulse, Gerard snatched his hat the moment the idea occurred to him, and in a few minutes after was traversing with long strides the Schwalbacher Strasse towards the Michelsberg quarter, where, from some words she let fall, he was aware that she had resided with the Rabbi.

CHAPTER XIII.

WHO SALOME WAS SUPPOSED TO BE.

HE soon found the house of the latter—the Herr Doctor Benjamin Ascher—adjoining the great synagogue on the north side of the street, and he observed the Tables of Law engraved on a brass plate on the door-post, as he was ushered into a pretty room, the windows of which opened to a beautiful garden.

The day was evidently some Jewish festival, as the walls of the room were garlanded with freshly-gathered flowers, a custom of the Hebrews at all feasts, especially that of the Tabernacle, according to the Jewish author of “Alroy ;” and on a marble console, before an allegorical picture, stood a seven-branched candlestick, “according to the pattern which was shown to Moses in the mount ;” but the waxen tapers were unlighted.

Here then had she been, under this same roof with the Rabbi, and Gerard’s haggard

eyes wandered over every feature and detail of the apartment with all a lover's interest, for doubtless she had been in it many a time.

Had she really gone—left Wiesbaden, as her letter asserted; might she not be still in the house of the Rabbi? Gerard's heart leaped at the idea; but the hope was soon fated to be dispelled.

Doctor Benjamin Ascher came, an old Jew of venerable, pleasing, and impressive aspect, without features so strongly, and often disagreeably, marked as the majority of his outcast race. Gerard awoke from his trance of hope as the old man entered, clad in a kind of gaberdine of black cloth, and wearing a skull-cap of black velvet, with which the snowy hue of his long floating beard contrasted strongly. He had evidently been disturbed at prayer, as he yet bore in his hand the sacred shawl with which the Hebrews envelope their heads during the time of orison.

The Rabbi, who evidently recognised Gerard, requested him to be seated, and asked in what way he could serve him, and as he spoke there was a hawk-like glitter in his keen black observant eyes.

“I have the honour of speaking to the Reverend (*ehrwürdig*) Doctor Ascher?” said Gerard.

“I am Doctor Ascher, at your service,” replied the Rabbi, bowing; “and you, mein Herr?”

“Gerard Melville, a stranger, whom you know not.”

“You mistake in some degree; I saw you but a short time since with—with Salome,” replied Doctor Ascher, placing a gold eyeglass on his thin nose, and scrutinising his fair-haired visitor closely.

“It is of her I have come to speak,” said the latter, starting up.

“Ah—I thought so—but be seated again, pray,” said Doctor Ascher, and a faint colour suffused the cheek of Gerard, as he added, “I took in the whole situation when I saw you with her in the acacia walk, near our Friedhof, and in my soul I felt sorry for you. She has left Wiesbaden.”

“So has the Baron Sonnenberg,” said Gerard, gravely.

“Of that I am aware, unfortunately.”

“Indeed! Are they together?”

"No, he followed her ; what happened exactly I know not, but he committed suicide this morning."

"Suicide !" exclaimed Gerard.

"Yes—he has just been found in the Hof-Giesberg, lying dead, with a pistol in his hand—the same pistol by which his brother perished. Salome is not one to be loved lightly," added the Rabbi, shaking his head, and as he did so the silver hairs of his beard glittered in the sunshine ; "did you, too, love her, young man?"

"Too well for my own peace, reverend sir."

"Then try to forget her !" said the Rabbi with energy. "I, who know her, would beg to impress this upon you."

"Her story—you know it then ?"

"Yes—so far as a man may know it," replied Doctor Ascher, as his eyes drooped.

"It is, you would hint, a strange one ?"

"So strange, mein Herr, that I know not how to talk of it. She is well known to our people in many parts of the world ; but her history, or alleged history, seems so utterly incredible that I am loth to think, and more so to speak, of it."

"Why ?" asked Gerard, whose wonder in-

creased with his sorrow at these words, while vividly in memory came before him her sad yet beautiful face, her dark but liquid eyes, that seemed to speak of some strange hidden story, and her sweet lips, that became, at times, sternly compressed as if with mental pain ;
“ why, Herr Doctor ? ”

“ Because it seems to the few who know, or suppose they know it, among our people, a matter that is better committed to oblivion.”

“ Is she a Christian ? ”

The Rabbi shook his head.

“ A Jewess, then ? ”

“ No—Heaven alone knows what she is. Rejected by Christians, shunned by Jews—yea, a terror to those who suspect her terrible story, she is yet, with all her weird beauty and gentle sadness, an object of pity—an out-cast—a wanderer in the world—and yet not of the world.”

Every word seemed to excite and interest Gerard more deeply, yet after a pause, he could only ask the matter-of-fact question :

“ How does she live ? ”

“ I know not. The ravens fed Elijah.”

"Such things do not happen now, Herr Doctor."

"God feeds the sparrows and tempers the wind to the shorn lamb; so may she be fed and nurtured."

"You speak in enigmas," said Gerard; "the ravens did not bear in their beaks current coins of the realm; and she seemed never without at least a kreutzer for a passing beggar, and thalers and Frederichs d'or to pay her way, in town or country, like any other person."

The Rabbi folded his thin hands and shrugged his shoulders in silence.


"Whence her strange name of Salome?" asked Gerard. "I never heard of it before—save in a romance," he added, thinking of his luckless novel.

"It is a name as old as our race," resumed the Rabbi, "and as you wish to learn the history of it, I shall endeavour to tell you. Did you never read of Salome, the daughter of Herodias—Salome who danced before Herod Antipas at that infamous and debauched banquet he gave in the Castle of Macherus, wherein John the Baptist was languishing as a prisoner?"

"When at school I did—and then I must

have heard the name," replied Gerard, lost in thought for a minute.

"Well, Salome was lovely beyond all human loveliness, and her grace in dancing to the sound of the harp and timbrel so charmed Herod the Idumean that he promised her, with the sacred bond of an oath, to grant her whatever she asked, were it the half of his dominions. On this she consulted her mother, the wicked Herodias, who, inspired by every evil passion, but chiefly by revenge on one who had never ceased to upbraid her for her sins and impieties, the Baptist, besought Salome to demand his head, and that it should be forthwith brought on a charger. A request so strange startled even the tyrant who heard it, for, bad though he was, he had conceived a good opinion of the Baptist as a just and holy man, whose discourses he had heard with pleasure, though his heart had been troubled when admonished by him of his faults; but bound by his terrible oath he was compelled to accede to the importunities of Salome; so the head of the holy man was struck off, and presented to her on a golden charger, wrapped, as the Christians aver, in that same piece of



snow-white cloth which is now preserved in the reliquary of Aix-la-Chapelle.

“On this being done, the damsel did not shrink from taking the ghastly gift into her hands by its black curly locks, and, presenting it to her exulting mother, drew a silver bodkin from her hair, and proceeded inhumanly, and in mockery, to prick the sacred tongue which had upbraided Herodias with her many iniquities (even as Fulvia had done the tongue of Cicero), saying laughingly the while,

‘This tongue is dead now, and shall never speak more.’

“But even as Salome spoke, the tongue also spoke, and the eyes rolled, and to the horror and dismay of all who stood by, it predicted that she should never know the happiness of death ; but should live—live on, as a punishment for her impiety and impenitence—live on in constant terror of the awful wrath to come !”

“But what has all this story to do with her I came to speak of ?” asked Gerard.

“Do you not follow me ?” exclaimed the Rabbi.

“No, Herr Doctor.”

"*She* is alleged to be that Salome of the legend—the daughter of Herodias—and that she did not die of remorse, as the story tells us."

Gerard heard the voice and saw the sharp impressive face of the Rabbi, and thought that he must be in a dream—a dream from which he should inevitably awaken, to find himself in bed in his hotel, or perhaps in the old dull lodging in that gloomy street between the Thames and Strand.

"Herr Doctor," said he, after a pause, "pardon me, but are you mocking me?"

"It is not my wont to mock anyone," replied the Rabbi, calmly, and without displeasure.

"Oh, pardon me—but all this sounds so utterly incredible—so beyond the rules of Nature!"

"I tell the tale but as it was told to me—not by her; but as it is known among our people; for such a being as this Salome they suppose to exist, and like that other well-known wanderer of the Hebrew race, who, legends say, is going ever afoot throughout the world, never dying, even from the hour of the Crucifixion to the present day, in constant

dread of the coming judgment. Those there are who say that, like him, Salomé has a grievous illness every hundred years, but recovers and renews her beauty and her strength. She often told me that she envied the dead ; she has seen nations die, if her tale be true, and pass away as if they had never been ; but she can never know the joy of dying to be at peace and rest—but remains an outcast of God and man ! ”

Gerard’s blood ran cold as the Rabbi’s words recalled some of those very speeches of Salome which he at the time, not unnaturally, deemed raving. Could it be that she was to wander the earth for uncounted ages, long after *he* had passed away ? It was a horrible and mysterious thought, repugnant to common sense, and he said as much to the Jewish Rabbi, briefly and coldly.

“ I agree with you,” said the latter ; “ but remember that, as a writer felicitously has it, ‘ there is a brass wall bounding all our inquiries (into the supernatural), against which we may strike our heads, but over which we cannot leap,’ and we have lost the art of reading the Celestial Alphabet, like those who lived

in the days of Jabaster. But I must own that, whether simulated, studied, or part of a frenzy, her knowledge of places, persons, and events has ever sorely puzzled me : for it seems to be ever on a past, and not a present period, her mind appears to dwell."

Gerard was so lost in distressing and perplexing thoughts that he scarcely heard what Doctor Ascher said, for the weird story of the latter seemed in some way to be corroborated by her undoubted horror on seeing the grisly human head placed in the hand of that concealed portrait of herself—that portrait of which she alone had the knowledge—by a strange artistic coincidence, by a second pencil at a later time.

His mind wandered rapidly over all his past intercourse with her, and he recalled her singular knowledge of his own secret thoughts and wishes ! By what mystery was she to be woven up with his existence, so much so, even, that in name and personal appearance, she was indetical with the heroine of his novel ? And her story—what was it—madness or romance ?

In Gerard's heart and in his memory,

and over all his future life he feared—for love was mingled now with fear—a shadow was enthroned, in the image of Salome ; he felt more bewildered than ever, and sorrowful, indeed, as he bade adieu to the Rabbi, regretting that he had ever thought of visiting him.

“In wandering from place to place, Herr Doctor, I may—nay, must find some trace of her,” said he.

“A vain idea,” replied Doctor Ascher ; “she will elude you if she desires to do so ; and better will it be for you never to look upon her fatal face again. You might serve for her thrice as long as Jacob did for Rachel, and be no nearer the end.”

Brooding over the incredible story he had heard—the key to such fabulous antecedents—he walked slowly homeward to his hotel, with his chin sunk on his breast. If her life, from any circumstances, real or pretended, lay so far, so utterly apart from his life, why had Fate thrown them together ; why, even for, a time, did they seem to be so thoroughly *en rapport* with each other, as on that night at Zevenaar, beside the Rhine ?

He grew weary—weary of conjectures ; but

he could not believe that he had really lost her—that she was gone for ever ; and for some days, by mere force of habit, perhaps, he hovered about those familiar meeting-places where there seemed to linger still the charm of her presence ; and daily he went to their place of parting at Michelsberg.

It could not be in nature that she was the mythical and mysterious being the Rabbi Ascher described !

Were not the places at which they had met and parted all unchanged ?—the shady road that led to the ruins of Sonnenberg, the sweet acacia walk by the solemn Jewish Friedhof, and the gay gardens of the Cursaal, where yet remained some of the beautiful creamy Gloire de Dijon roses, in which she had, with almost childish rapture, buried her fair, sad face ; and yonder was the gallery of the Cursaal, wherein he had overheard her strange conversation with the ill-fated young Baron of Sonnenberg ; and he almost wept for the living—the mysterious living—tears as bitter as he could have shed for the dead—for dead she seemed to be, under any circumstances, to him.

He would have gone again to the chamber discovered in the palace, to gaze upon the picture which had brought so much to pass, and re-assure himself that the whole of that episode was not a delirious dream: but he had read in the *Wiesbadener Tagblatt* that it had, by exposure to the air, crumbled away, and that not a vestige of it remained.

This was, perhaps, fortunate for Gerard.

He loved a woman who, though neither wife nor widow, was neither to be wooed nor won—a living myth, a miracle or an imposture! These ever-recurring thoughts produced a serious illness, which fettered him to his bed for weeks at Wiesbaden; and when he began to recover he felt that he could think more calmly of the affair, as of a pleasant dream, or of the dead. The dead! But was she not living still, and wandering—where?

“How many months and years there are of life to be spent, and even when life is over, I may not—shall not—meet her, if her story be true—if *her story be true!*” sighed poor Gerard, as he tossed feverishly on his pillow. “Am I crazed, or is she? or is that old devil

of a Rabbi an impostor and trickster, who sought to befool me ? Would that I had never come to this fatal place at all ! Yet her letter—her farewell letter—details so distinctly, so truly, to all appearance, the place where lie those important proofs we require, that there must I go at once—there, were it only to test her words, and for dear Julian's sake !”

CHAPTER XIV.

GERARD IN LONDON AGAIN.

“**M**EDIOCRE enjoyment is far likelier to be our lot in this world than ecstatic bliss, and those who yearn for something more than ordinary are apt to be left in the lurch without anything at all ;” and in this state of mind Gerard found himself after his illness and the storm of his passion, if we may call it so, had both passed away.

Gerard was, in many ways, most impractical, and as much a creature of circumstances as Julian ; he was, as we have shown, more prone to day-dreams than the latter, and now it seemed but too probable that for some time to come such dreams would be his chief relief and resource.

The spell that had bound him to Wiesbaden was broken ; the bubble had burst ; and strongly now came over him the desire to see Julian—to be with him once more, and to

hear his pleasant voice—Julian, whom he hoped by this time to find well and prosperously employed in London.

“How can I ever tell him of this strange love affair of mine?” thought Gerard. “People are naturally hard of belief. All that have to record seems beyond the bounds of reason, and how can I describe a creature so strange, so wayward, and mysterious as Salome? Better not to speak of her at all!”

Avoiding Cologne, the Rhine, Zevenaar, and Rotterdam, with all their recent associations—from which circumstance we may suppose that he was now healthier in mind as well as stronger in body—Gerard proceeded by Liege and Brussels to Ostend, and in due time found himself in London, where, when he presented himself at his old lodgings, the landlady scarcely knew him, so much did he seem the ghost of his former self; for although he strove not to think about Salome, her letter, which he bore always with him, and to which he frequently referred, as he had the strange contents of it to act upon, served to keep her image ever before him.

He was now to experience his next bitter disappointment. Julian, whom he had hoped to find in their old dull rooms, or of whom he never doubted to hear tidings, had left there long since, and gone no one knew whither.

But he extracted from their former hostess with difficulty—for the good woman spoke unwillingly as not wishing to pain him—enough of Julian's story to wring his affectionate heart; for he now learned how nothing monetary had been forthcoming after the production of the luckless romance, and that consequently Julian had not, as he (Gerard) expected, benefited thereby; and how, as his funds too evidently sank lower and lower, he had taken humbler rooms in succession, till he reached the attics; how, in the cold weather, to save fuel, he went without fires, affecting, with a forced smile, to be quite warm enough; how the paleness of his face and the attenuation of his form, as his last faded suit seemed actually to flap about him, showed that he must often have been without necessary food; yet when she had begged him to join her at tea, or a little supper, he had invariably refused, but always so sweetly, though it was

evident the offer hurt him. And then how at last there came a day when, after duly paying all he owed her, he went forth and returned no more—forth into the human wilderness—the living tide that seethes, and roars, and bubbles round the great dome of St. Paul's, and by the shores of that dark and muddy river which so often hides for ever the fate of many a homeless and despairing wretch.

“And this penniless and friendless creature who thus went forth into the streets is my brother—he who ought to be, and is of right, the Lord Hermitage!” thought Gerard, with a gush of bitterness and fierce sorrow in his heart.

Of his aim, object, or intention, Julian had said nothing, nor had he given a hint of whither he was going; indeed, at the time referred to, the unfortunate fellow knew not himself. Hence Gerard knew too well that to attempt to seek him were a task as vain as seeking to make a rope of sand. He could but endeavour to hope for the best, and trust to the doctrine of chances: but his heart, a tender and affectionate one, often died within

him with apprehension ; for Julian was the only human being in the world who shared his blood, or whom he could claim as a relative. The idea of their father never occurred to him, either as an object of regard or inquiry, and much less of interest.

So for many days Gerard wandered in the crowded streets, hoping that he might by some fortunate chance meet his brother ; but he pursued this daily task in vain. More than once did his heart leap and his footsteps quicken on seeing some real or fancied resemblance in a passer ; but it leaped only to sink again with disappointment.

Once he came upon a figure and features that he recognised—that there could be no doubting ; the closely-shaved and colourless face, the sprucely-cut but rather faded costume, the very shiny hat, paper Shakespearean collar, and the general jaunty air of Mr. Algernon Spangles, who was smoking a cheap cigar in the Strand, and who started with an amusing and suggestive, but evident trepidation when Gerard laid a hand on his shoulder.

“What, Melville, Gerard Melville! dropped

from the clouds ! ” exclaimed the jolly little actor, as he grasped the latter’s hand with energy and real pleasure, for he was a kindly-hearted Bohemian.

“ Can you tell me aught of my brother ? ” asked Gerard.

“ I cannot.”

“ Why ? ” asked Gerard, breathlessly.

“ I have not seen or heard of him for months.”

“ Months ! And how was he looking when you saw him last ? ”

“ He seemed at low water, poor fellow ; and, with all his natural pride, he was not too proud to let me, who am too often in that condition, share a sovereign with him.”

“ For that I thank you.”

“ Not at all—don’t say so.”

“ Where was he living then ? ”

“ I cannot say—I don’t believe he knew himself.”

“ And this was months ago ? ” asked Gerard, with a sigh.

“ Yes, but I cannot tell you to a day.”

“ Where was he going ? ”

“ Westminster way. In fact,” continued

Spangles, speaking with reluctance, and unwilling to pain Gerard, "he spoke of becoming a soldier."

"A soldier—in the ranks? My God!—poor Julian, poor Julian!"

"Yes, he seemed poor enough, Heaven knows."

This conversation gave Gerard a clue, and for days he now haunted Westminster, inquiring anxiously among the recruiting staff; but not one, in return for unlimited grogs, glasses of beer, and wine, could afford him the least information, for many who had seen better days were, they owned, apt to take Her Majesty's shilling under assumed names.

One day when, sunk in sad thoughts, Gerard was loitering near Hyde Park Corner, a young lady passed him on horseback, attended by a groom in the Deloraine livery. She proved to be Amy Kerr, who recognised him instantly, and reined up her nag with a little gasping exclamation of delight and surprise.

"Gerard!" said she, stooping, and presenting her tightly-gloved little hand. "I knew

not that you were in London ; we have not seen each other for ages and ages ! ”

“ And there have been many and sad changes since then, Miss Kerr.”

“ Call me Amy, as you used to do in Ettrick,” she replied, looking at him earnestly, almost tearfully, for was he not the brother of Julian ? He was handsome and thoughtful-looking, with a manly though fair face, and crispy, curly hair of an almost golden tint, and eyes that were womanish in their gentle sweetness. It was a face expressive of noble impulses and high aspirations, and, as Amy thought, so like Julian, indicative of strength of mind and tenderness of soul. Her cheeks flushed as she asked :

“ How is Julian—and where is he ? ”

“ Would to Heaven I could tell you—he has not been seen for months,” replied Gerard, sadly.

She then told him about the accident that befell Julian in the street, and as she did so her eyes filled with tears, for she loved Julian, the absent, the lost—yea, it might be the dead—with all the strength and tenderness of which her romantic nature was capa-

ble. For him she was willing to sacrifice anything—to wait years even, if Fate required her to do so—for sweet Amy Kerr was singularly generous in her nature.

“I never heard a word of all this,” said Gerard, with increasing sadness; “you may know, perhaps, that I have been in Germany?”

“About another book—so Julian told me; but you will never conceive a heroine that can surpass your Salome.”

“Salome?” repeated Gerard, faintly, as he started at the name, and as Amy spoke, the Rabbi, Benjamin Ascher, flashed back on his memory—the Herr Doctor, with his thin pointed features, his black glittering eyes, his silvery beard, velvet cap and gaberdine, and, more than all, his incredible story of Salome!

“Yes,” resumed Amy; “your old friend, Kate—Lady Deloraine—and I are quite agreed upon that point.”

“And this accident—” began Gerard.

“Julian seemed — do excuse me, dear Gerard, but we are all such old friends that I may say this to you ——”


“ Seemed poor, you would say ? ”

“ Yes, dear Julian,” her voice trembled at the name, “ seemed miserably so, yet he rejected, proudly and coldly, all our offers of assistance, and one day, ere he was fully recovered, he quitted the hospital, and since then has been heard of no more.”

“ And did his—did the Earl whose horses trod him 'down do nothing for him ? ” asked Gerard, almost sternly.

Amy blushed deeply, and was silent ; she seemed pained, and Gerard did not pursue the subject ; but on comparing dates it was evident that Amy had last seen Julian long after Spangles had done so ; and thus Gerard concluded that the surmises of the latter had been a mistake ; and that his own inquiries at Westminster were as useless as they were futile.

As he gazed on Amy's fair face and masses of bright brown hair, and watched her rapid play of feature, her sparkling expression, and pretty tricks of manner with head and hand, he thought again of the grave deportment and solemn beauty of the statuesque Salome, by way of very contrast.



"I always live with Kate when in London, and am her guest at present," said Amy, as she shortened her reins; "won't you call and see us?" she added, in her most coaxing manner.

"Excuse me—I do not know Lord Deloraine, and have no wish to do so. I have my brother to seek, and till I find him, or can throw some light upon his fate, I can go nowhere—see no one—settle to nothing," replied Gerard, half incoherently; for the idea of going as a visitor to the house of the haughty Earl, who disowned him, and ignored the existence of himself and his brother, was more than he could contemplate with patience; while, on the other hand, Amy Kerr—she knew not precisely why, unless some instinct told her—was loth to inform him of the Earl's inhumanity to the sufferer, and that he had sternly forbidden the Countess to inquire after him, and that even she, herself, had only done so by stealth and under the matronage of the housekeeper.

Gerard now warmly but hurriedly bade adieu to Amy, who looked anxiously and wistfully after him as he strode along Picca-

dilly, for with him she lost the link that bound her to the past, and the last faint hope she had of hearing of that Julian she loved so well and generously in her secret heart.

After this meeting Gerard took courage anew, and advertised again and again in the second column of the *Times*, till hope died away, as no response ever came, and the chilling fear grew over him that if Julian had not left the country he must be, indeed, no more.

But for Julian's sake, in reality, the single-hearted Gerard cared, perhaps, little for regaining, or asserting, their birthright; till the conviction came forcibly upon his mind that it was required of him to clear his mother's name and honour by the production of those proofs which Salome had so singularly asserted to be in existence.

Moreover, if he was to act in the matter at all, now was the time, for Gerard's funds, impaired by his protracted residence and illness at Wiesbaden, were becoming an object of equal solicitude and consideration; so he prepared for his journey to the north.

CHAPTER XV.

IN PARK LANE.

SINCE Julian's disappearance from the hospital, before his health was completely restored, Amy and the young Countess had frequently communed together on the too probable misery that surrounded him, and the impenetrable mystery that involved his fate.

They even, at times, wept together on the subject; for Kate was too honest not to feel occasionally remorse mingle with her compassion, while Amy loved him truly, had ever done so, and had no humility in catching his heart on the rebound, if she could do so—no difficult matter, surely, at his years; and Kate, yet all unaware for *whom* she had forsaken him, would still gladly have seen Julian consoled for her loss by the love and undoubted beauty of her wealthy friend.

And now, too, she knew that for this mythic love, or in the pure indifference to

others enforced thereby, Amy had twice refused young Sir Henry Drake, of the Cold-streams, greatly to the surprise of the Earl, and much more to the surprise of Sir Harry himself, who, though he knew she had many admirers, could not detect among them one who seemed to be distinctly a rival.

Amy and the Countess were scarcely aware of the wealth and luxuries that surrounded them; by constant use and wont, state, equipage, and all the accessories of rank, seemed as necessary to them as the air or the sunshine; so they could but vaguely and weakly indeed shadow forth in imagination the miseries of poverty and all the contingent sufferings it brings; thus, though they speculated upon it compassionately, they could scarcely realise the depth of destitution to which—if he yet lived—the unhappy Julian might have fallen.

And when Amy saw, as she sometimes did, Lord Deloraine and Kate sitting closely and lovingly together, with her head of ruddy golden hair nestling snugly on his shoulder, while he toyed caressingly with her pretty hands—for the *blasé* rake was as fond as it

was in his nature to be of his dazzling young wife—she felt full of envy, and wondered when, if ever, she and Julian—that *other* Julian, whose consanguinity to the peer they so little suspected—would have the right to sit thus fondly in the sight of the world.

- Then the image of the absent or lost was for ever being conjured up by the utterance of his name ; as Kate always called her husband by his Christian name when they were alone, or among those with whom they were familiar.

As yet, there had been no prospect of children whatever, and Kate, who loved little ones so much, naturally longed to have one of her own. Girl-like, of course, she had never given a thought to the subject before ; but now that she was married, and had been so for some time, she envied the maternity of other matrons, titled or untitled ; and to please herself and her husband—who, cosmopolitan though he was, certainly did wish his name and rank to be perpetuated in the tomes of Burke and Debrett—she felt that nothing would make her so proud and so happy as to have a chubby baby of her own—a little Lord Hermitage.

And times there were when Kate would shyly steal away the child of a friend into some remote corner, and pour out all the love of her yearning heart in kisses on its little face—kisses that were as innocent as the unuttered hope that Heaven might be pleased to accord such a baby of her own.

But retributive fate seemed to have decreed otherwise, and certainly though Lord Deloraine, the last of his line, would fain have seen an heir to his ancient title and historic patrimony, he still could only think of the two handsome sons of Gladys with annoyance, to say the least of it, as their sudden production or recognition would prove but a source of ridicule and gossip.

The idea was not to be tolerated for a moment. They would have made him quite a "fogey" in the eyes of the world, and, more than all, of his young wife, "though nobody is elderly till he is sixty or seventy now-a-days." My Lord Deloraine was a good hater; in fact, his heart had never forgiven anyone; and thus he would not forgive Julian and Gerard for the circumstance of being his own sons—sons of whose existence he had

been utterly ignorant till that day of the otter-hunt in Ettrick.

He was a man full of irony and scepticism in the virtue of every human being except his golden-haired Kate—a hard-hearted, ill-governed, and unprincipled man. Middle-life was creeping now upon the reprobate peer; his first wife, the deluded one, was dead; he had seen her tomb, and looked upon it with heart unmoved and eyes unmoistened—the tomb on which her maiden name, not *his*, was inscribed, as she believed that she had no right then to it, for had not his own lips told her so? And thus she had died with his cruel and relentless lie graven in her heart and soul, and their boys—his heirs—the Lord of Hermitage and Master of Deloraine, were gone no one knew whither, all ignorant, as he imagined, of their own rights and their mother's wrongs.

And yet, with all this, when in his place in the House, or as chairman of meetings held for objects of philanthropy—it was respectable so to act, being now a married man—few men could express themselves better at times, “from the teeth outwards,” as some

who knew him well suggested, on the subjects of morality, religion, and the common good. Yet Deloraine was no hypocrite; it was only a facility, a way he had—and he felt occasionally that it was a fine thing to talk.

Kate felt more lonely now than during her first season or two in London. Her younger sisters, Ermentrude and Muriella, had, under her auspices, made good marriages, so her old gossip, Amy Kerr, in some measure took their place with her; while her mother—a cold, proud, and politic old lady—well satisfied with this state of affairs, had gone to Malta, as her husband, Colonel Kingsmuir, had—after all his years of rest and acquisition of wealth—been seized by a warlike mania, and joined, by express invitation, the staff of his old friend Lord Raglan, then the commander-in-chief of our troops in the Crimea.

The evening was closing when Amy Kerr, without removing her hat or riding-habit, joined Kate in a high state of excitement, as the latter was seated, lost in thought, in a bay-window of the drawing-room, looking out on the shadows deepening in Hyde Park.

Amy had her recent meeting with Gerard Melville to rehearse, duly dissect, and repeat over and over again.

So Gerard knew nothing of his brother's fate, or actually whether he were dead or alive, as Amy whispered, her fine eyes welling with tears the while. Where could he be—what doing—how subsisting? Surmise and conjecture were vain. Kate was puzzled and remorseful, Amy full of sorrow and perplexity; for since the affair of the accident, and her stolen visits to Julian during his convalescence, the girl had somehow conceived him to be more peculiarly her own.

She spoke to Kate in a low voice, as they nestled together in the recess of the bay-window, and half hidden by a huge majolica jardinière full of blooming flowers fresh from the conservatory, lest the Earl should overhear the forbidden subject; but he, at that moment, was intent upon a Scottish newspaper, a paragraph of which he read and re-read with a grim, yet, oddly enough, a complacent smile rippling over his dark and handsome face.

It announced the sudden demise, at Dum-

fries, of Mr. Uriah Grippie. That worthy limb of the law, upright elder, and industrious burgess—so ran the local print—had of late years been addicted to somnambulism; had walked out of an upper window of his house—an old and lofty one—and been killed on the spot.

“So, so,” thought the Earl, as he ultimately tossed the paper contemptuously aside, “the sole witness who could testify to that affair with Gladys is gone at last!”

Then, as he looked about him and saw the luxuries by which he was surrounded—the heavy velvet curtains shading a suite of beautiful rooms; the luxury, refinement, and splendour on every hand; the pictures, china, and other treasures of art; a cedar log smouldering on the hearth, with Kate’s lapdog coiled up before it in cosey warmth, a thought did flash upon him, but for a moment only, of who and where was the Lord Hermitage!

Anon he started as if with impatience at his own weakness, and drawing forth his cigar-case, betook him to the smoking-room.

Though Amy did not waver in her secret regard for the luckless Julian, and often mar-

velled whether he still preserved the tiny laced handkerchief he had taken from her in the hospital, times there were that, even when alone, her damask cheek suffused with a hot blush, lest the indulgence in such an unrequited fancy were unmaidenly, though none knew of it save Kate, from whom she had no secrets, and none suspected her of such a weakness save the lost one himself, and perhaps Gerard ; and times, too, there were when, not unnaturally, there came to her memory, with real regret and pity, the love that had been honestly offered her by Sir Harry Drake, of the Coldstreams, a young, passionate, and enthusiastic fellow, of a character very different from the *blasé* men about town she was wont to meet in London.

Twice—yes, twice—had he laid all he possessed at her feet ; but she was the heiress of Kerrshope, and valued not money, though she might a title, given by such a husband. She recalled his first proposal, when the Household Brigade were under orders for the East, and when the dread of perhaps losing her for ever inspired him with a tenderness of manner, a power of language, and a resolution

beyond himself ; and how he vowed that the dangers he was to dare would make him utterly reckless, without the promise of her love and faith ; how his mellow and pleasantly modulated voice broke at last with the intensity of his emotions, as the light of her beauty and the touch of her hands as he clasped them, or clung to her, bewildered him.

Yes—she could with ease recall every word—the time, and the place, for no woman ever forgets such an episode in her life.

Then she recalled his last appeal, on the night before the Guards paraded in front of Buckingham Palace, to take farewell of the Queen, who wept over their departing steps. It was in Kate's boudoir, and they were alone.

“Do wait—do give me time,” she entreated. “You do not know what you ask of me, Sir Harry—I have not a heart to give—do not ask me to give a promise I may never fulfil.”

“And the redemption of which I may not live to ask. Speak, speak, Amy ; you are the only woman I ever loved.”

This was perhaps not the case, but he fully thought so at the time.

“ Promise, only promise me,” he urged.

“ I cannot, and I have already told you so.”

“ Farewell, then, my darling—we part now—too probably never to meet again,” said he gloomily, as he turned his back and resolutely left her.

She remembered the morning of the march, when the Guards left, and few who saw forgot it, for the heart of mighty London seemed to throb responsive to the beat of their departing drums ; those stirring drums, which were followed by so many who were to return no more.

CHAPTER XVI.

WITH THE HEADQUARTER STAFF.

THOUGH it seems but as yesterday since the long peace of Europe that began at Waterloo was broken by the first cannon-ball at Alma, a new generation has sprung up since then, and as the scene of our story changes to the shores of the Black Sea, we may be pardoned in giving a paragraph or two to explain why we fought there, and what it was all about, at the very time the grave had closed over the victor in many glorious battles, when he was laid by the side of Nelson in the crypt of St. Paul's.

However little interest Britons might have concerning the disputes between Greek and Latin monks as to the privileges attached to protectorate of shrines, and over the holy places in Jerusalem or Bethlehem, it was this, in one sense, petty matter that primarily brought us before the walls of Sebastopol.

France had become the special protector of these spots, consecrated in religious history, so early as 1740 ; but on the 5th of May, 1853, in the usual aggressive spirit of Russia, Prince Alexander Menschikoff, who from being the grandson of a pastrycook had become a general, and ambassador at Constantinople, presented an ultimatum there, demanding for "Holy Russia" the acknowledgment of her protectorate over all the Greek subjects of the Ottoman Porte—or, in other words, an assertion of sovereignty over four-fifths of the Turkish people.

Hence the squabble that began about the shrines in Jerusalem suddenly became a vast European difficulty, and, to preserve the balance of power, Britain, Austria, France, and Prussia felt themselves compelled to interfere.

In furtherance of his scheme of aggression and conquest, the Emperor Nicholas, on the 26th of June, boldly avowed his purpose of occupying Wallachia and Moldavia, the principalities of the Danube, as guarantees for what he unjustly demanded, and the last-named state was instantly entered by General

Dannenberg at the head of a Russian corps d'armée.

The powers of Western Europe made many attempts to arrange the fast spreading quarrel ; but the Sultan refused to yield, gave the Emperor fifteen days to withdraw his troops, and ordered Osman Pasha, who from being the son of a Croatian peasant had risen to be one of the most renowned of his generals, to take post at Shumla, with 120,000 men.

On the 22nd of March, 1854, Her Majesty, by her message to Parliament, announced her intention of aiding the Sultan against Russia, and on the following day we declared war.

The Emperor Napoleon also sent forth his defiance, and his fleet speedily joined ours at the mouth of the Dardanelles, while one of the most magnificent squadrons that ever left the British isles sailed for the Baltic, under Napier, famous old "Fighting Charlie," to menace Cronstadt, and abide the issue of events.

While the land expeditions were in progress, the indignation of Britain was greatly increased by the production of what was named the "Secret Correspondence," in which ambitious Russia coolly proposed to her the par-

tition of the Turkish empire on one hand, while making exactly the same overtures to France, in which *we* were carefully kept out of the scheme; so the mass of our entire people were unanimous for war.

One of the finest armies that ever left Britain—the carefully developed army of forty years of peace—landed in the Crimea, under Lord Raglan, but only after, by the foulest ministerial mismanagement, it had been left to lose its best and bravest men by pestilence at Varna.

Marshal St. Arnaud resigned his post as Minister of War to lead the army of France, having as his second in command General Canrobert; while the combined fleets of Britain and France, led by Admiral Dundas, entered the Euxine, and inaugurated the terrible drama of the war by the bombardment of Odessa.

Lord Raglan, the old one-armed comrade of Wellington, was accompanied by men, as Generals of Division and Brigade, whose names had long been foremost in the annals of the great Duke's victories—those fields which, for the first time, gave Britain a great place in the eyes of the world; but ere we landed

in the Crimea so fearfully was our army decimated by cholera in Bulgaria that thousands found their grave in the Vale of Aladyn, and thus few of our cavalry regiments could muster more than 250 sabres; then *winter* was drawing near, and our most sapient ministry sent the army into the field without tents, ambulances, or even ammunition enough in the artillery tumbrils, or a sufficiency of medical stores.

Gloriously we stormed the heights of the Alma, captured the seaport of Balaclava, and then, instead of taking possession of the narrow isthmus of Perecop, and thus by one stroke cutting off the entire Crimea from Russia, the allies began to invest Sebastopol on one side, carefully leaving it open elsewhere, so that fresh supplies of men and stores could be readily poured into it by the enemy, who had moreover plenty of time given them to make it almost impregnable.

How disease, death, starvation, and privation of every kind, followed and surrounded our soldiers before that fatal place, are portions of history now, and how all these horrors deepened with the winter snows; yet every-


where was true British pluck always prominent. Truly has it been said that we have among us the best elements to form a military nation ; for our people, though able to endure hardship, and too often trained to it by the course of events, are prone to create rather than to avoid bodily peril, even in their very sports and pastimes.

The first month of winter was drawing near—winter, when “January and February, Russia’s greatest generals,” as the fated Emperor Nicholas called them, were about to take the field, and the sufferings of our Crimean army, sufferings the result of home mismanagement — some there were who said of treachery, and certainly of inevitable parsimony—had nearly reached their zenith, when Colonel Kingsmuir, as evening closed in, was seated in his tent, not far from Lord Raglan’s headquarters, which were in the centre of the lines—the British extending away on the right towards the valley of Inkermann, the French on the left, with their extreme left-wing towards the Star Battery, and opposite to the cemetery of Sebastopol.

The Colonel’s abode was a strange affair,

half tent, half hut, and wholly a wigwam ; but therein he sat writing, by the light of a stable-lantern, on the head of one empty flour cask, while another partially cut down had been manufactured into a species of elbow chair for him by his servant ; and therein, while muffled in a furred Russian *shovbah*, his mind could not help reverting to his splendid home in Ettrick, and to his three fair girls at home, as he wrote of his welfare and recent events to his anxious wife at Malta.

A portion of his hut was made of planks and wattles plastered over with mud, and in that part lay his camp bed, composed of coarse ticking (on an india-rubber ground sheet) filled with fern and wild lavender, that, when not damp with rain, diffused a rather pleasant aroma. The front portion was a bell tent, sheltered by a palisade, and having the earth dug out, forming a species of hole, which enabled him to erect his tall figure without knocking his head against the canvas. This hole was about ten feet in diameter and nearly three deep, while a trench around the outside carried off the rain water or melted snow.



This part he playfully named his drawing-room, as a piece of matting from Constantinople covered the irregularity of the floor, and a barrel filled with stones secured the pole of the tent. Horse rugs, india-rubber sheets, and felt mattings, made the place almost, but not quite, a snugger, wherein the necessities of life become enjoyed as actual luxuries.

In a recent affair, when a Russian force came suddenly out from the Redan to scour the works being formed in front of it, his life had been saved by a young soldier of the Foot Guards, belonging to Drake's command, but whose name he had failed to discover.

A reward had been offered by the brigadier, in orders, but to the honour of the battalion, no man came forward to claim it; so Colonel Kingsmuir naturally supposed the poor fellow had fallen amid the hurly-burly of that dreadful night; and his letter was full of this episode, for it was a time when the camp teemed with stories of the murder of our wounded by Russian officers and men alike, even inflaming the minds of all at home and abroad against them.

The Colonel's hand became tremulous with

emotion as he concluded that which might prove a last letter homeward.

“Be of good cheer, my dearest wife,” he wrote, “and fear not to look both fate and danger in the face. The kind hand and good will of Him who brought me away in health from that awful valley of the plague in Bulgaria, where so many now lie, where the Thorn of Christ covers all the wild places will send me back in safety to you and our three darling girls. I have been many times under fire since we landed here ; but as yet, thank Heaven, no fellow-being has fallen by my hand, and save in self-defence, long may it be so.”

He had just sealed his letter with a prayer and a blessing for her to whom it was addressed, when young Sir Harry Drake entered, bringing a fearful blast of cold wind with him ; and in his costume and *tout ensemble* presenting a figure he certainly never thought to cut in this world or any other.

His tawny-coloured moustache and beard had outgrown all the aspect they were wont to have in Regent Street and the Row ; he was cased in a rough pilot pea-jacket, patched

with pieces of cloth of various colours, and having furred cuffs ; a species of fur cowl or cap covered his head ; he wore long boots of brown leather, that, like his frayed and tattered trousers, were covered with mud from the trenches ; a field-glass was slung over one shoulder ; his canvas haversack, like a veritable beggar's wallet, was over the other ; and a sword and revolver were in his waist-belt.

Such, and so forth, was generally the aspect of most of our infantry officers now, and they had long since ceased to feel either surprise or amusement at each other's scarecrow appearance.

"Welcome, Harry," said the Colonel cheerily ; "how goes it in front ?"

"As usual—men being picked off every hour by the rifles from the Redan, while planting gabions in the zig-zags of the right attack."

"The daily story," said the Colonel. "Be seated on that bullock trunk. You look weary."

"I have not had a proper meal to day. I am used up, by Jove ! and about as useful now as a third wheel to a gun."

"What cannot be cured must be endured, Harry," said the Colonel, laughing.

"I *am* sick of the work here, but what is to be done?" exclaimed the young fellow, as he manipulated a cigar and handed his case to Kingsmuir; "we can't do the 'urgent private affairs dodge' any longer, and one can't send in his papers when before the enemy. However, I hope we shall eat our Christmas pudding inside Sebastopol."

"So do I, with all my heart. Have you any tidings of that young fellow yet?"

"He who dragged you out of the awful row the other night?"

"Yes."

"No, not a word Colonel, yet he must have belonged to my mixed command of the Guards—Scots and Coldstream; we had eight killed and twenty-one wounded that night. The Russians are said to have brained two of the former, after wounding them."

"The scoundrels! He I refer to, no doubt perished that night."

"Bertie Slingsby assures me that he did."

"Poor lad!"

"Your horse was killed under you."

"No, by Jove! before I could mount he was killed *over* me, and I must have fallen into the butcherly hands of the enemy, had this private of yours not dragged me up, mounted me on a riderless nag, and kept a whole gang of flat-capped and snub-nosed Muscovites at bay with his fixed bayonet, while I leaped my horse out of the half-dug zig-zag, and by a miracle escaped, as I before told you, the fire from the Redan at two hundred yards distance."

"If alive, the proffered reward must have discovered him."

"Perhaps not. I have read that when Sir John Moore was carried wounded out of the field at Egmont-op-Zee by two of the Gordon Highlanders, he offered a reward on parade, but no man stepped forward to claim it."

"Ah, but our guardsmen, London bred, are not wholly unused to quiet tips, and he may turn up yet," said Sir Harry, laughing, "and not be so jolly green as your Gordon Highlanders."

"I only escaped the fire of the Redan by the fog that surrounded us."

“Fog! by Jove, it was as thick and dark as a London fog in February, or a day at Archangel when the sun is in the south.”

“You have come at a fortunate time, Drake, I can actually give you some supper. Join me in a mutton chop.”

“Thanks, Colonel,” replied the young baronet, whose face actually brightened at the prospect, “egad you are lucky. My haversack has been empty for a week, and I have been sponging on everyone.”

“The animal was grazing on the hill-side some ten minutes ago, when my fellows shot it, and now its ribs are broiling on a couple of ramrods; and don’t forget there is brandy in that jar beside you.”

“Thanks,” replied Drake, as he withdrew the stopper, and half-filled a teacup with the contents. “Any news from home by the last mail, Colonel? My letters arrived by the drum-major last night, when I was in the trenches in the dark, and we dared not, for fear of the Russians, have a light, even for a cigar, and I could not read them; tantalising, was it not?”

“News—all are well in town—the Delo-

raines, I mean ; and your little friend, the heiress, is with them still."

Drake coloured perceptibly, and took another sip of the brandy.

"Come, come, Harry, old fellow," said the Colonel, "when thinking or talking of Amy Kerr, don't keep growing red and white by turns, as if you didn't know which tint became you best. It will all come right with the little girl in the end, believe me. I never knew Kate's influence fail."

"I hope so, Colonel," replied Sir Harry, cheerfully, and all unaware that the little influence Kate possessed over her friend in this way would all be exerted for *another*:

"Little Bertie Slingsby, of ours, was very soft in that quarter, too."

"Ah, your cousin."

Suddenly a sound was heard.

"What is that ? Shovels, is it ?"

"Like enough. Two poor fellows were suddenly struck down by cholera, close by, to-day," said the Colonel, "and I ordered them both to be buried in one grave, to save time."

"But that is not the sound of shovels," said Drake, starting to his feet.

“No; by Heaven, it is the clatter of artillery; and there go the bugles of the inlying pickets!”

“That fellow Mouravieff is at it again; a petty sortie from Sebastopol—a little game we are getting used to; and so,” added Sir Harry, with something in his voice between a sigh and a laugh, “we shan’t have our chops, Colonel, till we drive the beggars in.”

“Ta-ta for the present,” said the Colonel, as they buckled on their swords and repaired to their posts; but we are happy to have to record it was merely an *alerte*. Sir Henry and his host returned safely, and ample justice was done to the efforts of his soldier-cook.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE ADVANCED SENTINEL.

AMONG the advanced sentinels from the line of outposts thrown forward to the doomed city in front of the British investing force, on the day after the *alerte*, was one who, like all the rest, was standing motionless on his beat, with rifle "ordered" and bayonet fixed; his gaze intently directed to the ground in front of him, when not turned, from time to time, to observe the other sentinels on his right and left, all of whom were so placed as to be able to communicate with each other easily, and with the main body of the picket to which they belonged.

Muffled in his grey great-coat, tattered and frayed into holes, and plastered with the genuine Crimean mud, he was in heavy marching order, with canteen and (empty, alas!) haversack. Even his black bearskin cap—for he was a Scottish Fusilier Guards-

man—looked faded and worn by constant exposure, and his boots, as shown by the legs of his trousers being thriftily rolled up, were yellow and flat-footed in shape, showing evidently that they had been whilom the property of some slain Russian, and taken to replace those soled with pasteboard, as furnished by John Bull's commissariat.

On his hands and round his neck were some of those warm knitted comforts which the kind girls at home sent out in bales to our poor fellows in the East, though, thanks to routine and red-tapeism, too many of them arrived, like the Christmas puddings, not in winter, but in midsummer.

Julian, for it was he, was standing in the full blaze of a sunshine that gave no warmth, for the November breeze that came from the vast waste of the Euxine was chill in the extreme. It played with his crisp curls of darkest brown and his unkempt beard—for neither scissors nor razors were much in use now—and a perfect specimen he seemed of mature and developed manhood.

Sorrow, care, and suffering he had undergone to the full, as the curves of his mouth

and his melancholy eye showed ; but his figure, set up by infantry drill, was erect and tall, and his expression of face was clear and honest, straightforward and manly, though the gaze of his soft, dark eye became wistful at times.

Apart from the enforced humility of his station, and the many hardships of life in the Crimea, after the horror of all he had undergone in London he did not think his lot a hard one. He was but a unit in the force that was to achieve great things, only a private soldier, it is true ; but his officers and comrades—and the wives of the latter, too—had speedily discovered his manly courage on many occasions, his tenderness to women and children, to the sick and the dying, even to the old and the ill-favoured, his steady adherence to every duty, and his contempt of danger. In short, he was one with whom every girl was ready to fall in love, and every man was ready to fraternise, for he possessed, without knowing it, a subtle but general power of pleasing.

“ Here,” he muttered, “ I thought I might live or die unknown and undiscovered by all

—my unhappy past forgotten ; and already I have been face to face with Colonel Kingsmuir, of all men in the world ; but, fortunately, in the night, amid fog and strife, and to this hour," he added, with a bitter smile, " he knows not *who* it was that saved him from the bayonets of the Russians ! "


Julian's post was on the extreme left of the British lines, and consequently the sentinel next him in that direction was a Zouave on the extreme right of the French. In his rear was the plain, one-storied little cottage, with a union-jack flying above it, wherein Lord Raglan had his staff and all his fortunes.

In front, the ground, like all the rest of the country around Sebastopol, was broken up by nature into dreary and precipitous ravines, in many places rocky, parched, and dusty, without a shrub, or tree, or blade of grass, and the roots of the wild vines had everywhere been grubbed up for fuel ; but overhead was a clear, cold, blue sky, in which the wild sea-mews screamed at times, and against which, when not hidden in the grey, eddying smoke of " the villainous saltpetre,"

Sebastopol stood distinctly forth, with its green domes, white walls, and grim forts, in which the cannon stood over each other, levelled tier on tier, through black, square portholes, while the immediate foreground was full of hollows, made for rifle-pits or by exploded shells, and studded by half-sunk cannon-balls, with here and there a Russian leather helmet lying half trampled in the mire.

Far away to his right he had occasional glimpses of the grand harbour, where the long bridge of boats with the outer-boom lay, and where the ships of war, with other craft in unknown numbers, were sunk.

But stillness never reigned, by night or day, within or around Sebastopol, for the hand of Death was never, never, never idle; and even then, as Julian stood on his solitary post, now and again a shout might be heard, perhaps a mocking laugh, and a puff of white smoke seen to spirt up from a rifle-pit, where a soldier lay *en perdu* taking pot shots at the ramparts, or at an occasional Russian straggling along the bottom of the Inkermann valley; and further off in the distance, shells might be seen soaring in air from the works



within the lines of the cemetery, to burst among those of the French.

Already such petty episodes had ceased to interest or excite him, and he heeded them no more than he did the wild birds that were scared by the sound, and gave full swing to his own brooding thoughts.

So, far away from the strange and varied scene before him, his mind was hovering, while reviewing, as he often did now when alone, his brief past life, with all its vanished hopes and dead ambition—for even that sentiment was dead, though now he was a soldier, and treading the proverbial path to glory—yea, and to the grave.

His mother's wrong could never be righted now—and Gerard ! *where* was Gerard ?

Of his blighted boyish love he seldom thought at all now, or did so with a smile of indifference. Ended as it had been, such a passion could not last ; but was sure to die, and so, dead it was. It could not exist even as a regret, and so Kate Kingsmuir's existence chiefly came to memory in conjunction with the idea of Lord Deloraine, and, it might be, of Amy Kerr.

Of the latter, singular to say in some sense, were all his tender reminiscences now, for some hearts are so constituted that they must love and cling to something—even a shadow—and Julian was one of these. Thus he thought pleasantly over her past love for him, her tender pity and compassion when he was weak and ailing in that odious hospital, and he pondered fondly over the flattering conviction that, degraded, forlorn, and humbled though he was, she had loved him, perhaps did so still, though she knew not where he was, or how situated; and then a soft smile overspread his embrowned yet haggard face, as he thought of all that, under happier auspices and had Fate proved kind, *might* have been.

He conjured up the bright-eyed and happy girl with whom, in romping days, he had actually played cricket; with whom he and Kate had often fished—Amy, who, in her childhood, had often, to please him, gone bare-foot, with snow-white feet and ankles, wading into the mountain burn, to catch trout and minnows for him.

He saw her and the stream too, with its

waters gurgling under the bells of the long yellow broom ; overhead the soft blue Scottish sky flecked with white clouds ; and again came to memory the fragrance of the newly-mown clover, the sweetbriar mingling with the wild lilac, and there, too, was the soft, drowsy hum of the mountain bee, and once again he seemed to be in Ettrick Forest.

The present passed away ; the past returned, and the young soldier felt his heart swell within him as he recalled the lines and the hope of Scott, that in age—

“ By Yarrow’s streams still let me stray,
Though none should guide my lonely way ;
Still feel the breeze down Ettrick break,
Although it chill my withered cheek ;
Still lay my head on Teviot stone,
Though then forgotten and alone.”

From this reverie he was suddenly roused by seeing before him a Turkish officer of infantry, who appeared so suddenly that he seemed to have sprung from the ground, so altogether unaware had he been of his approach.

Julian shouldered his musket in salute, on which the Turk came close up to him.

He was clad, as the Turkish officers usually are, in a surtout and trousers of blue cloth, laced with gold, but simply, as he seemed to be of subaltern rank; he had, of course, a scarlet fez, with a blue silk tassel and the inevitable round brass plate or button worn by all ranks, from the Sultan himself down to the drum-boy, a gold belt and crooked sabre.

His face was sallow, with features that had not the pointed keenness of the Turk, but were coarse, irregular, and strongly partook of the Calmuck characteristics; the black beady eyes were almond-shaped, but cunning and cruel in expression; he had a great grizzled moustache, the drooping points of which curved under his mouth like a horseshoe, and he had a livid scar on his face, which had evidently been laid open from cheekbone to chin by a sabre-cut.

Julian noted all these points at a glance, though quite unaware that this was not the last he was fated to see of the scarred stranger.

“ Unless you are on duty, sir, or have a regular permit from head-quarters, I cannot

permit you to pass to the front," said Julian ;
"it is against orders."

"Of that I am aware," replied the other in perfectly good English. "Will you do me the favour to read this?" he added, unfolding a letter, in which Julian read a permission signed by Lord Raglan for "the bearer, the Said Othman, Yuzbashi (*i.e.*, captain) of the Turkish artillery, to pass and repass any outpost of the army."

"Thanks, sir," said Julian, as the yuzbashi folded up his paper with a haughty smile.

"I am simply going to see what progress your works are making in front of the Redan and the White Tower."

Julian, for a moment forgetful of the difference in their positions or relative rank, bowed his assent, whereupon the stranger, deliberately and nonchalantly, took his way straight to the front, and, passing round the left flank of the battery and other works held by the Naval Brigade, disappeared in one of the hollow ways that lay near the Redan.

Until the last vestige of his scarlet fez vanished, Julian watched him with some undefinable suspicion of evil—even emotions of


alarm, for so sunk had he been in reverie, that the stranger had come upon him suddenly and abruptly ; moreover, it came to him like the memory of a dream that he had recently heard somewhere the name of this identical artillerist, the Yuzbashi Said Othman, and these ideas were fated to take a more consistent form a few minutes after.

The Zouave, who was the next sentinel on his left, drew near and called to him by name, and turning, Julian recognised a pleasant and handsome young French soldier, with whom he had become intimate, and whom he met often in Balaclava, where, in the improvised French café, they had whiled away many an hour over dominoes and the contents of each other's tobacco-pouches.

“ What—Achille Richebourg, is it thou ? ” asked Julian in French.

“ Myself, *mon camarade*, ” replied the Zouave, drawing closer and closer than discipline permitted to Julian's post, and waving a flask ; “ *à votre santé*, M. Melville ! ”

“ My canteen is empty—I have nothing wherewith to drink in reply.”



"Take this and finish it; it is the best *eau de vie* of little Pompon, our *vivandiere*."

"Thanks; but I must leave you some."

"Drain it, I say; do nothing by halves, *camarade*," said the Frenchman, laughing; but he was one of those gay fellows who laugh at everything. "If you go into action, empty your cartridge-box; if you uncork a bottle of wine, finish it; if you love a girl and wish to win her, never leave off till you do so. Drink, Julian! *sacré*—that is the stuff to make moustachios sprout."

"You saw a Turk just now?"

"I have seen him for some time," said Richebourg the Zouave, as he hung his flask to his girdle; "were you asleep, that you did not see him passing along the whole line of your sentinels?"

"Along the whole line?"

"Yes—but in rear, of course; he then spoke to you and passed to the front."

"He had a permit."

"Signed by whom?"

"Lord Raglan."

"*Bon!* I saw his signature once; it seemed just as if made by a spider escaping from an ink-pot."

"You forget that he has only his left hand."

"Ah—a French bullet took off the other at Waterloo. He has been long in harness—a brave old fellow. There are no Turks in this part of the lines. What might that Bono-Johnnie have wanted?" continued the suspicious Frenchman, who, though young, was nevertheless an older soldier than Julian.

"He is the Yuzbashi Said Othman, and merely wished to see our works in the vicinity of the Redan."

"*Halte la!*" cried the Frenchman, with a laugh, and also with an expression of astonishment in his face; "you have been completely done! That is the name of a Turkish Yuzbashi who was killed in a skirmish a week ago, close by the Ottoman [Redoubt. This man has been a *mouchard*, a villainous spy, who has somehow obtained the dead man's papers. It is a trick that is nearly stale already. But here is your officer going his rounds, and I must be off to my post. *Nom d'un Pope!* we have too probably not heard the last of this!"

Achille Richebourg hurried off to his post,

and Julian, when he saw Sir Harry Drake approaching with the sergeant of the picket, simply making an hourly round of the posts to see that all were on the alert, felt very much inclined to report how he had been duped, and to repeat all the Zouave had told him ; but he was, as we have said, yet a young soldier, scarcely aware of the vast responsibility involved in outpost duty, and, dreading ridicule rather than danger, he remained silent on the subject ; but the Zouave proved a true prophet in his fear that we had not heard the end of the affair.

And ere long he bitterly regretted that he had not duly warned those in authority of the episode, and so have enabled them to take proper precautions in time.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE SORTIE OF THE 26TH OCTOBER.

IT was the evening after the little episode we have just related, and also the night after the glorious and victorious charge of our slender and shattered Cavalry Division in the valley of Balaclava, and while the Allies were watching a strong force with which their flank was threatened, and having their attention thus in some measure distracted from the regular work of the siege, that the enemy resolved on making one of their usual sorties in great strength from the city, and approaching the lines of the Second Division posted on the Inkermann ridge under General Sir De Lacy Evans, an Irish veteran of the Peninsular War, on whose breast hung the Grand Crosses of the Bath and of the Legion of Honour.

Weary with recent trench work and full of thought induced by the apparently hopeless

separation from his brother, of whose movements he was now as ignorant as Gerard was of his, and with whom he had no means of communicating, Julian lay in the hut which had been recently the abode of four other Guardsmen ; but two had recently found their graves in the rifle-pits, and the other two had gone to die in what was not inaptly named "the bloody hospital" at Scutari, so Julian had now the wretched edifice of planking, turf, and mud to himself, with a sand-bag for a bed, and plenty of field mice for companions.

Through the open door of his hut he watched, as he lay, the smoke, and heard the din of the cannon and mortars now being discharged at intervals at the troops in the trenches, but simply with a languid interest now, the event was of such daily occurrence.

To his practised ear it seemed as if every projectile had a sound peculiar to itself, as it winged on its way to death and destruction ; and he often thought, in an artistic point of view, that our twelve and thirteen inch shells were really pleasing objects in the dusk of

evening or the gloom of night, as they ascended in graceful arcs, with a revolving motion and singing sound ("Whistling Dicks," the soldiers named them), to descend with deadly precision amid the Russian batteries—a descent instantly followed by the bright flash of the explosion.


But on this occasion the din of the enemy's guns fast became terrific—the round shot came swooping with a strange rushing noise; grape began to whistle fast and fiercely; while the Russian shells, that generally, from being badly fused, burst in mid-air, spread in fragments that descended vertically with terrible force.

Now the drums beat, and the bugles sounded "to arms," and Julian, rushing forth, found the whole of the Second Division falling in, in hot haste, in front of their huts and tents, as a sortie, mustering, as it was afterwards stated, ten thousand bayonets with twenty-three pieces of cannon, came furiously out of Sebastopol, under cover of the fire we have described.

The sputtering fire of the pickets fast deepened into a concentrated roar after they

fell back upon the main body of the Second Division, while the Brigade of Guards and a Battalion of Rifles from the Fourth Division were on the alert to receive the attack, and General Bosquet moved up five of his French regiments in support.

The cruelties to which the Russians had subjected so many of our wounded, the severities with which they had treated many who had been taken prisoners, marching them to Kiew, and farther, on foot, with their hands tied to the manes or tails of Cossack ponies, and every pace accelerated by a cut from a whip or a lance-thrust from the howling sons of the desert who rode behind—these, together with strange rumours that Lord Fitzgibbon, of the Light Brigade, had been captured at Balaclava and been sent to Siberia by order of Colonel Mouravieff, served now to inflame the minds of our soldiers with a personal hostility, hate, and rancour against the Russians—an emotion that the massacre of our seamen at Hango and of our wounded at Inkermann was yet to render more fervid; and Julian felt much of this in his heart, with a longing to close in, to grapple with, and be



at them with the bayonet, as he watched the dark grey masses coming on, half seen, half lost, amid the eddying smoke, with bayonets glittering above their flat caps or leathern helmets, according to the costume of the various corps ; and ever and anon their hoarse hurrahs rung out upon the murky air.

At first it was imagined that the movement was a mere feint to distract the attention of Lord Raglan from a real and more general attempt to force Sir Colin Campbell's line at Balaclava ; but it soon became evident to Colonel Kingsmuir, who had made a swift and keen reconnoissance, that a real attack upon our trenches, and the trenches only, was the object of the sortie, and his information on this matter fully confirmed the suspicions of Sir De Lacy Evans.

If, in action, an officer can know little of what is going on beyond the immediate vicinity of his own regiment or company, still less, infinitely so, can the mere private soldier. Julian felt himself a humble unit then, indeed ; he thought ambition had died within him ; but now, when he heard the din of the deepening strife, when the colours were unfurled and

flying ; when he heard the orders issued by his superiors with confidence and bravery—the orders that he had but to obey, and in doing so perhaps perish among the nameless rank and file—his inborn spirit and the courage of his race blazed up in his breast ; he repined at the humble rank he held, and with clenched teeth and a fierce bitter sigh, as he loaded, cast about, reloaded and capped his Minie rifle, he thought he would die happy could he do so in his right name and character, as Julian, Lord Hermitage !

Led by Mouravieff, it was alleged by some—by Prince Gortschakoff, it was said by others—the Russian columns rushed at a quick double march across a ravine, formed in line, and advanced with fierce rapidity, till smitten by a tremendous fire from our batteries, when they halted, wavered, closed in over their piles of dead and wounded, and continued to pour in their file firing with such precision and rapidity that it seemed as if one might as well hope to escape from the rain-drops of a thunder shower, as that storm of bullets that came singing in the air.

Caps were pierced again and again ; Julian's

bearskin was perforated twice ; epaulettes were shot away ; Sir Harry Drake had his revolver shot from his side, and his chum and cousin, Bertie Slingsby, had twice a narrow escape from round shot, which lodged in the ground close by and covered him with mud.

Julian's right-hand file had an arm torn off by a cannon-ball, and his breast shattered ; the man on his left, who had lost his bearskin, was killed by a rifle shot in his head, and terribly disfigured. His blood and brains flew over the face of Julian, who, blinded and sick with disgust, fell over some wounded men, and ere he could regain his place in the ranks and clear his obscured eyesight, the regiment had advanced, he lost it in the smoke and confusion, and finding himself among the Light Company of the 95th, he remained in its ranks.

With their artillery—those pea-green painted guns, with which our soldiers were so familiar—the Russian columns broke, and commenced a disorderly retreat, while at the same moment Captain—afterwards Sir William—Peel poured from the sailors' battery a dreadful fire of grapeshot and rockets into their confused ranks and completed their rout.

With wild and exulting cheers—while the Guards were halted in reserve—the troops of the Line advanced in pursuit, driving them pell-mell over the rough and corpse-encumbered ground, where men of the 17th and 34th Russian regiments were lying torn with every species of wound that cannon-shot and shell can inflict.

Ultimately they were driven into the very gates of Sebastopol, close to the walls of which they were followed by our troops, whose ardour the officers found it impossible to restrain; but prior to this, a Russian field officer, whose horse had been shot under him, and whose grey *capote* and flat forage cap made him closely resemble one of his own privates, made a desperate rally with a few, and first checked, and then drove back, a little band of pursuers to which Julian had attached himself.

These fell back, firing briskly, to a ridge close by, leaving in the hollow between several of our wounded; these, the Russians, despite their screams and cries for mercy, proceeded at once to bayonet, and the dismounted officer with his sword was seen to despatch more than one unfortunate creature.

Filled with fury—maddened by this sight—a handful of Champion's regiment rallied on the ridge, and made a rush at them, under an officer, who led them on, crying :

“ Follow me, my gallant Derbies, and slate these butcherly scoundrels.”

The ground was re-taken at a rush, and the Russian party put to hopeless flight, but not before Julian—who nearly fell against him in the confusion—recognised in the leader the “ Yuzbashi ” of the other day, the Russian spy with the gash on his cheek, and the fierce grizzled moustachios that curled under his mouth !

So this sortie was the result of his visit to the British works before the Redan.

The recognition bewildered Julian, but, nevertheless, he resolved, if possible, that the assassin should not escape ; kneeling, he twice sent a shot after him, as he went plunging down a ravine that led to one of the city barriers, the guns over which now re-opened with shot and shell ; but he was so heated and flushed with the events of the evening, the rush of the pursuit, that on both occasions he missed him, and the bugles of the 95th were

now sounding the "retire!" but this was not effected before the officer commanding the party ascertained from a wounded Russian soldier that this barbarous fellow was no other than Colonel Ivan Mouravieff, who commanded the troops in the vicinity of the White Tower.

On the field lay six hundred Russian dead alone; our loss was about eighty, and we took many prisoners. Julian had already learned to look upon death with the calm heart and hardened eye of a soldier; yet now, when the high excitement, the fierce ardour, of the brief conflict and victorious pursuit were ended, and he retraced his steps over the field where the dead and wounded lay thickly among the wild lavender and blue crocus flowers, which grew there in vast profusion, he felt his sympathy moved by many a harrowing sight; and as he took off his heavy bearskin cap, and wiped the perspiration from his throbbing temples, he looked sadly to the glorious sun that was setting in the west—the west, where lay the land whose glory and interests our soldiers had come hither to uphold—and he wondered if he should ever see it again,

or what would be the end of all this wild work.

Our own wounded, and even the Russians, were already being fast borne from the field, but apart from all, in a solitary place, Julian saw one of Bosquet's Zouaves lying, and waving his hand, as if for succour, from time to time; and on approaching, he was shocked, but not surprised, to recognise his friend Achille Richebourg, suffering from a ball in his leg, round which some comrade had tied a handkerchief, as a species of tourniquet, to stop the bleeding, and then left him to his fate.

"Welcome, *mon camarade*—give me a mouthful of water, will you?" cried the Frenchman, to whose baked lips Julian applied the mouth of his wooden canteen. "Ah—*sacré!* you see what your little Turkish officer has brought to pass—the vile *mouchard!* But I did not think the result of his visit would come so quickly."

"You will scarcely believe, Richebourg, who he proves to be."

"I neither know nor care—the grandson of the pastrycook himself perhaps."

“Mouravieff, who commands in the White Tower ! ”

“ *Mort de ma vie !*—do you say so ? ”

“ I have tried to pick him off, but failed ; my hands shook so much.”

“ I am in dreadful agony,” moaned the Zouave through his clenched teeth, “ and can’t endure it much longer. If I am not assisted soon, I shall tear off the tourniquet and quietly bleed to death.”

“ Don’t speak thus, my friend,” said Julian, as he slung his rifle ; “ I shall carry you to the rear.”

“ Carry me—*ouf, mon camarade*, what a baby you must think me ! ” replied the Zouave with a grim smile.

With infinite difficulty, for the latter was utterly incapable of assisting himself, Julian lifted him on his own back, and marched steadily off with him towards where he knew the surgeons were at work with sponge, bandage, lancet, forceps and knife, the Zouave alternately groaning heavily with pain, muttering his grateful thanks, and politely tendering apologies for the trouble he gave.

“ Do not apologise or thank me, comrade,”

said Julian ; " I know you would do quite as much for me."

Nevertheless, though strong and sturdy now, he rather staggered under his load.

Achille was a Zouave to the life; a joyous, jaunty young Parisian, embrowned by service and war in Algeria, his neck bare, as shown by the low-cut collar of his blue jacket, his baggy madder-coloured breeches stained with the mud of the trenches, and with every accoutrement and strap, bayonet and pouchbelt, his " cabbage cutter " or charlemagne, canteen and haversack, slung loosely about him.

Julian liked the society of the young Frenchman, he was so much less rough in tone and manners than many of his Guards comrades; moreover, brave and worthy fellows though they were, many of their ideas, anecdotes and reminiscences referred to life in London, and so far as his knowledge of it went, Julian would fain have forgotten that.

As they drew near the camp, two mounted officers rode past, evidently on their way to the little cottage where Lord Raglan had his headquarters; and they proved to be no other than General Bosquet and Colonel Kingsmuir,

who checked their horses for a moment as Julian staggered on with the Zouave, who raised his hand in salute to his turban.

"*Tres bon, mon camarade !*" cried Bosquet, with a pleasant smile rippling over his fat brown face, as he held out two five-franc pieces ; "I thank you for your good care of my soldier."

"I thank you, M. le Général," replied Julian, blushing scarlet, "but I must decline to accept payment for doing my duty as a soldier and friend."

"That is nobly said, my lad !" exclaimed Colonel Kingsmuir, approvingly, but regarding Julian at the same time rather keenly and inquiringly.

"But again I must thank you, *mon camarade*," said the old General, as they rode off together.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE WOUNDED ZOUAVE.

ORDERLIES and hospital assistants were constantly coming out of, or entering, the great marquee, where a group of regimental and staff surgeons were busy among the moaning, and too often shrieking, wounded; their coats off and shirt sleeves rolled up, their hands and arms bloody as those of butchers in a slaughter-house—even their faces were so too; and the sight that Julian saw, as he staggered forward with his helpless friend, was a very harrowing one, and raised in his heart an emotion of gratitude that he had, as yet, escaped untouched.

Without and around the marquee were many of those who had been slightly wounded, sitting patiently on the ground or on their knapsacks till they could be attended to—pale, silent, and sad in aspect—with, it

might be, pensive thought of wives, friends, or parents far away.

The more severely injured by shots in their limbs or bodies lay stretched on the ground side by side, all more or less in extremity of agony, their tattered uniforms stained with blood, while they eyed, some with dogged indifference and others with something of fear, the open instrument cases, the rolls of bandage and lint, and cried ever and anon for water, which was given them by the assistants and two or three French sisters of charity, who were gliding about in their black robes and great white hoods, acting like ministering angels, as they were:

The shrieks of one poor fellow of the 95th, who was having a leg amputated, without chloroform, made Julian's blood run cold, and had a due effect upon the nervous system of Richebourg, the Zouave, as he deposited him on the grass at the door of the marquee, and a wild imploring expression stole into his face, as an orderly with a knife ripped up his loose trousers and exposed a gunshot wound for the examination of a young medical officer.

"Take courage, my friend," said Julian, to whose hand the Frenchman clung.

"I shall need it all; more than I ever did when under fire, which I have been many times since, with old Francois Canrobert and Bosquet, I marched against the Arabs at Narah."

"Don't be alarmed, old fellow," said the young surgeon laughingly; "there is no animal in the world so tenacious of life as a Zouave, and I shall pull you through. Give him some wine from that bottle," he added to Julian; "he looks weak, having lost much blood."

"*Oui, oui.* When under fire I have no fear of wounds or death either," continued the Zouave, who did not quite understand what the surgeon said; "but now—now—it is a very different matter, and—*Oh, mon Dieu!* but this is terrible!" he added in a shriek, as the surgeon probed the wound, and blood spurted forth as from a syringe; "*Monsieur le docteur,* must my leg come off?"

"Not at all."

"Because, if so, you might as well take


my head, for then my dancing and my fighting days were ended together."

"The ball is lodged here in the fleshy part of the thigh, and out it must come, but the bone is untouched."

"*Voila !* out with it then, monsieur," said the sufferer cheerfully, yet wincing sorely with pain.

Patients were crowding in fast, there was no time to lose ; the forceps were speedily resorted to, and the ball was snipped out, with a deluge of blood, amid which operation poor Achille fainted, and ere he came round again the wound was dressed, bandaged, and the young doctor was busy on another soldier, whose arm was taken at the socket, a terrible operation, under which he died.

We had then no Army Hospital Corps, no Krankentrager like the Prussians ; orderlies alone—or men told off for "fatigue" duty—bore the wounded away to the places improvised as hospitals. Those of the French were at some distance from the scene of that day's operations, so Julian, with the aid of a comrade, conveyed Achille Richebourg to the hut of which he was, as yet, the sole tenant, and



would likely be so until a new draft for the regiment arrived.

And most grateful was the young Frenchman for this arrangement, as his fate, even among his own comrades, might have been very different. The medicines in store for our troops were of the commonest kind, and were often short in quantity; but the French medical staff, so boasted of at first for its efficiency as far excelling ours, had now become quite as ill-provided in all the necessary stores and appliances for their wounded, who, in thousands, were shipped off for Marseilles and elsewhere, often in steamers that were without pallets or even straw for them to lie on, with their wounds undressed, without a surgeon on board, their nursing, if any, devolving, like their burial in too many instances, on the compassionate crew.

From his character, his education, and fate, Julian, though liked and respected by his brother soldiers, lived a somewhat isolated life among them—a life that on service, and before the enemy daily, he tolerated better than he could have done if in barracks.

Their thoughts, their conversation, their

turn of mind, their past and their probable future, were not as his ; yet, by nature, he was affectionate, loved society and the companionship of a friend. The Frenchman, by his politeness of manner, his general *bon-homme* and bearing, in some sense supplied this blank, and became a source of interest in his eyes, while the task of attending to his little wants became a pleasure to Julian, whom in the past months his half-boyish ways and strange anecdotes of Algerian life amused, and often weaned away from his own sad thoughts.

With Achille he now resolved to share his humble and too often most wretched rations, which, being barely enough for one, could be scarcely enough for two ; his green unground coffee, boiled in a camp-kettle, on a fire made of vine roots and stray scraps of wood, and which many a time was extinguished by the pouring rain ; his hard ship-biscuits, parboiled tough pork and salt junk, for Soyer's system of cookery was yet unknown in the Crimea ; but the wounded man required other things that were as much beyond his reach as gold or precious stones ; and hardy soldier though

the Zouave was, he recoiled from much that the English mess-cook provided, and said that he could make a better dish out of one of his old boots.

"Ah ! comrade Julian," said he on one occasion, "I should like you to taste such a *poulette à la Marengo* as Renée of Ours, the 3rd Zouaves, and I, made on the night after Canrobert stormed the rocks of Narah from the pestilent Arabs. Shall I describe it ? "

"If the story does not give me a useless appetite."

"I sharpened my cabbage-cutter," said he, pointing to his sword-bayonet, "cut the poulette, or what passed for such, into quarters, seasoned with pepper, salt, and some mushrooms that grew with the garlic by the wayside ; then we skimmed off the oil, added some lemon juice from the nearest lemon tree, with some chopped parsley, and served it up hot. *Ma foi !* even old Bosquet, who was our Colonel then, tasted it with delight, and looked as if he could have eaten his four fingers and thumb ! The only thing he objected to was the poulette itself."

"Why ? "

“Because we had to make a young monkey do duty as such.”

On the second day after the extraction of the bullet, Julian found, on returning from some patrol duty, that the young surgeon had re-dressed the limb of his guest, and that the latter seemed to be too evidently sinking from the lack of some necessary stimulant, such as a glass or so of wine, which he had not the means of procuring in the camp, unless he almost begged for it at some officer's hut, and reluctant to do this, lest the request might be misinterpreted, Julian searched his pockets and bethought him of Balaclava.

The search was somewhat a useless one, and was perhaps mechanically done, as Julian knew but too well that till next pay-day he had only a shilling in the world! Then, by the association of ideas, his memory flashed back to the day when he met the jaunty Mr. Algernon Spangles, who lent him ten of these coins, and told him to pass them, as repayment, to the “next fellow” who might be in need of them.

How little could Julian then foresee that the personage so indicated would be a French

Zouave in the huts before Sebastopol! He smiled a grim, proud smile of contempt, when thinking that though he was a soldier now, helping to win battles, the story of which (without his name, alas!) would go down to posterity, he was still in a condition so sordid—he, the Lord Hermitage.

“Always that thought,” he muttered, as he bade adieu to Achille, and after obtaining the necessary permission, set out on his way to Balaclava, the memory of the poor young Frenchman’s pale face urging him at every pace of the way.

The evening was dull and grey, and a bitter wind swept up the gorges from the Black Sea, as he left the camp behind, and on gaining the summit of an eminence he halted and looked back, and then, for the first time, was astonished by its apparent immensity of extent.

In every ravine long rows of white tents, or grotesque huts, with bare spots around them, were visible, and all the rugged paths that led to them were constantly being traversed by dragoons in stable-dress taking horses to water, by rumbling waggons full of ammunition and stores, strings of mules laden with wood, food

and forage, by mingled British and French soldiers of all arms, by Croats, Greeks and Tartars, picturesquely clad and armed, but brown-skinned, black-bearded and melodramatic looking ruffians.

But with all these details he was too familiar now to linger long, so, turning once again, he hastened on his way, and in about an hour found himself, after trudging down hill, in the little town of Balaclava, the harbour of which was crowded with British and French shipping of every description, with man-of-war boats incessantly shooting to and fro, and everywhere were seen floating about the swollen and odious carcasses of cavalry horses, that had recently perished in a transport, by all breaking loose and kicking each other to death.

And now, with some interest, Julian looked for the first time on the great convent that crowns one of the cliffs, a thousand feet in height above the harbour, and on the walls of which, the last red rays of the sun were fading away, as they also were on the battlements of the now ruinous Turkish castle.

The neat white houses of the original town, shaded by tall poplars, and inhabited by

Arnaouts—the descendants of those Greeks who aided Catherine the Second in the conquest of the Crimea—were filled with soldiers of the Allies, and amid them innumerable huts and wigwams, in use by the latter as shops and stores, had sprung up.

The few shops in the place were chiefly kept by Maltese, who were too poor to invest in anything good, or in an extensive manner, but they charged the most exorbitant prices for everything; and Julian felt his heart sink as he saw the prices placed upon their wares—even a bottle of Bass being marked two shillings.

A few months later saw a great change however; at Kade-Koi, which is close at hand, quite a little town of new huts sprang up, where every ordinary want, and also little luxuries, could be had, and where even railway publications were procurable at the open-air stalls kept by the Maltese.

Julian looked round him wearily, and began to fear he had come on a bootless errand; and, sooth to say, from much trench work of late, from hardships, coarse and scanty food, he would well have required for himself that

which he only desired for the poor Frenchman.

The idea of obtaining what he wanted at any of the Maltese shops or stalls he abandoned in despair, and was turning away, when suddenly he found himself before a species of general store and drinking shop, over which was an English signboard, and from the interior of which a considerable din of voices and laughter was issuing.

Encouraged by this, he entered the crowded place, which was pretty well stored with tobacco of all kinds, pigtail and Cavendish, &c., Crimskoi wine of the country; dried tongues, that probably were those of horses, wiry hams, suspicious-looking German sausages in strings, hung from the rafters, and other goods of various kinds, for some of which, married soldiers, who, by remittances from home, were always more flush of money in the Crimea than others, were chaffering, together with many sorely bedraggled women from the camp.

Many sailors, orderlies, and officers' servants were there for the same purpose, and all who had money to pay for them were drinking beer and spirits; thus the keeper of the place and

his assistant had more than their hands full, and, as prices went, seemed to drive a thriving trade.

To the former Julian applied, almost timidly—for few things make such a coward of a man as an empty purse—for “a shilling’s-worth of wine.”

“A shilling’s-worth of what?” roared the dealer.

“Wine.”

“We don’t sell wine by shillings’-worths here, my fine fellow,” replied the other, so gruffly, while busily attending to some one else, that Julian coloured deeply and passionately, for pride and fine feeling had neither been blunted as yet; “even a pint o’ Bass costs nigh half a crown.”

“Of that I am aware,” said Julian, with a sigh.

“Then what the devil would you be at?”

“May I inquire the price of your cheapest Crimskoi wine?”

“Five bob the pint bottle.”

“I have only a shilling, sir,” said Julian, hoping to conciliate the fellow.

“Then drink swipes. You’re a Scotsman,

ain't you? Oh, you Scotsmen are knowing blades."

"I want the wine for a sick comrade, a poor Zouave," said Julian, and then, unwilling to be defeated, with something of a sigh he drew forth from his pocket-book the little laced handkerchief of Amy Kerr, and with intense reluctance said, "This lace is valuable I presume; take it in barter."

"It is lovely lace—cost a guinea a yard, if it cost a penny. How did you come by it, soldier? But what is the use o' lace to me? Try the Maltese booths—oh, you Scotsmen, you Scotsmen, are such pushing fellows—now, look sharp, Pawsey," he added to his partner.

Something in the voice made Julian look more keenly at the speaker, and then he instantly recognised him—the Jew rogue who diddled him in London! Though his thick, coarse black hair was not oiled so elaborately as of old, and his costume was quite different, and he did not make such a display of mosaic jewellery, Julian had not the least difficulty in recognising the pretended leading partner of the firm of Hookitt and Pawsey!

So they now kept a general store at Balaclava !

Julian disdained the fellow too much to recur to their past acquaintance, and somewhat expensive interview, and still hoped to get the wine for Achille by means of the handkerchief.

“ 'Tis the truth the poet sings,
That a sorrow's crown of sorrow
Is remembering happier things.”

So he thought, as memory reverted to the sweet, yet sad, moment when he obtained from Amy Kerr this relic of herself, which was thus a relic also, and the sole one he possessed, of his past life—the life that could come to him no more. He was still lingering with it in his hand, when the affair suddenly took a new turn.

CHAPTER XX.

AMY'S HANDKERCHIEF.

IT chanced that among the motley and varied customers of Messrs. Hookitt and Pawsey that evening was Sir Harry Drake, of the Coldstreams, chaffering, with some amusement to himself, for a bundle of cigars. While thus employed, and stowing them away in his haversack, he saw the whole episode of the handkerchief, the sad, expressive face of Julian, and man of fashion though he was, or rather *had* been, he thought that in all this there was some little history, and regarded his brother Guardsman with more interest.

“This,” thought he, “must be the *preux chevalier* of whom Kingsmuir spoke—he who refused the five-franc pieces of General Bosquet; he had a wounded Zouave on his back, and of course for him he wants this wine. Poor devil—he is very kind! You seem a good sort of fellow,” added the young baronet, aloud; “accept a cigar.”

"Thanks," replied Julian, bowing; and then hastily rising his hand in salute, as he remembered himself.

"Accept from me also this crown to get the wine you want for your sick friend."

"A thousand thanks, Sir Harry," exclaimed Julian, colouring alike with gratitude and pleasure; "in loan I take it."

"Loan, don't talk of such a thing to me—and now I must be off to the camp like a bird." Then Drake added, with a good-humoured smile, "That handkerchief in your pocket-book is a souvenir of your sweetheart, no doubt—some pretty girl at home—glad I saved it for you—eh?"

"No sweetheart of mine, Sir Harry," said Julian, coldly, as he put the bottle of wine in his haversack.

"Well—a sister, perhaps?"

"I have only a brother in this world, and he is," said Julian, in a faltering voice, "I know not where."

"Well," persisted Sir Harry, "she must be, at least, some dear friend that you treasure it thus, or would only part with it in performing an act of mercy? One doesn't

meet with such romance now-a-days, and this is quite refreshing," added the baronet, scraping a match and lighting a cigar, while handing one to Julian for the same purpose.

"A dear, dear friend, indeed," replied Julian, with some emphasis, as the girl, in all her bright and tender individuality, now removed from him like a planet in another sphere, came before him in imagination.

"That lace shows she has excellent taste," said Sir Harry, as Julian, with an irrepressible sigh, was replacing, with care, the handkerchief in his pocket-book; "what is that in the corner?"

"Her initials."

"And a crest?"

"Yes, Sir Harry."

"A crest, by Jove—a crest!" and he laughed with great good humour; yet the laughter grated unpleasantly on the ear of Julian, till the quick eye of Sir Harry Drake saw what the crest *was*, and what the initials *were*. Then the expression of his face and the tone of his voice—nay, his whole bearing—changed instantly.

"Was the owner or donor of it a lady?" he inquired.

"She is a lady, Sir Harry," said Julian, with a thickening voice.

"And how named?" was the blunt question.

"Excuse me, Sir Harry Drake; but you ask too much."

"I do not ask in a tone of authority," said the officer, endeavouring to dissemble or conceal his annoyance, "for authority I have none in a matter like this; but the crest is one with which I am perfectly familiar."

"It is that of the Kerrs—there are many of the name in Scotland."

"But only one of Kershope."

"It is the crest of that family, sir," replied Julian, thinking the inquiry had proceeded quite far enough, and clasping his pocket-book he replaced the latter in the breast of his sorely frayed red coat.

"Under what circumstances, pray, did you obtain the handkerchief?"

"Now, Sir Harry, pardon me, but you are adopting the very tone you repudiated."

"Pardon me—I have no right, perhaps, to inquire;" and then he thought, "No doubt

some servant wench or dressing-maid has appropriated it and given it as a souvenir of herself in Kensington Gardens or the Green Park; of course, how else could he obtain a handkerchief of *hers*—of Amy's? But I'll have it, any way!"

"For that trifling thing," said he, an article which, of course, cannot have the slightest personal interest to you, I will gladly give you a sovereign—even five sovereigns, if you will?"

At whatever price it was won, it would be, he thought, a pleasant surprise, a pretty compliment, to Amy, that he had found a souvenir of her in the Crimea, so he drew forth his purse, on which Julian retired back a step.

"I thank you sincerely, Sir Harry, for the crown you have so kindly lent me, and I shall, if spared, repay it with gratitude; but ——"

"Stuff—you must not adopt this tone to me!"

"But, for uncounted gold I would not *sell* that handkerchief."

"Yet you offered it, not a minute since, to this fellow, the sutler, here!"

"In a work of mercy and human charity for another, not myself; and she, whose it was, would not disapprove of my doing so," replied Julian, with a profound salute, and preparing to withdraw.

The presence of Sir Harry in that bustling place did not quell either the fun, noise, or laughter of the toppers, or the angry remonstrances of the ladies of Corporal Brown or Private Smith, as they were striving in vain to "cheapen" the exorbitant charges of Messrs. Hookitt and Pawsey, as an officer's costume was fast becoming very ill-defined within sound of the guns of Sebastopol.

Thus everyone was so busy around them that none took heed of the remarkable conversation between Julian and Sir Harry Drake.

Something of anger mingled with the surprise of the young Guards officer, that he—a club-man, a baronet, a man-about-town—should be brought thus in juxtaposition with a private soldier of his own brigade about a girl's handkerchief! But, then, that girl was Amy Kerr, who had twice refused him! However, he should condescend to sue or inquire

no more ; but turned on his heel and left the place.

“This fellow is some romantic ass,” thought he, as he mounted his horse and galloped towards the camp at a rasping pace, for he had a vague feeling of irritation on the subject ; and he suspected, from the singular expression of Julian’s eye, and the inflection of his pleasantly modulated voice, that there was some mystery, difficult to unravel, unless he fell back on his former idea, that the donor had been a waiting-maid.

For some undefinable reason the young baronet said not a word to his most intimate friend, Colonel Kingsmuir, on the subject ; yet he would have blushed to own himself uncomfortable about it.

Who the deuce was this mere private, who indulged in melodrama, who gave himself such devilish undefinable airs, and all so quietly, too ?

Julian felt provoked by the turn the affair had taken, and dreaded lest his incognito might be taken from him, as he had a nervous dislike of becoming known now to Colonel Kingsmuir, as he was ignorant how much the latter knew,

or did not know, of his secret history. But the real truth was, that the Colonel knew nothing about it at all, and thought no more of Julian Melville, the lad in Ettrick, than of the last year's snow.

There were many tempting and most eatable condiments displayed in the varied establishment of Messrs. Hookitt and Pawsey; but Julian could only buy a small loaf, to share with his French guest; and now, half starving as he felt himself, he took in another hole in his waist-belt, to stay the craving of nature, and turned his back on Balaclava, facing the wind, now more than ever keen since darkness had fallen, that came whistling from the Euxine, round the bleak marble rocks of St. George's monastery.

Thinking over and over again his recent conversation with his superior officer, and wondering why *he* had so much interest in a souvenir of Amy Kerr, Julian, lost in thought, trod hastily and manfully along the narrow, rough, and in many places odiously muddy uphill road that led to the camp, the faint lights of which erelong he began to see twinkling before him, between the spurs of the hills in the

hollows wherein the tents were pitched and the huts built.

Already he had passed all the patrols and advanced sentinels, thrown towards the rear along that part of the road for the preservation of order among the many wild and half-lawless nationalities peculiar still to the ancient Chersonesus Taurica, and he had already entered the rough hollow way that diverged from the vicinity of Lord Raglan's quarters, towards the huts of the British left attack, when an unforeseen accident befell him.

The sling of his haversack—decayed and rotten by incessant wear and exposure to the weather—gave way, and the latter, with its contents, rolled down over some rocks and vanished from his sight.

Poor Julian stood like one bewildered—cut to the heart by a catastrophe so sudden and irremediable ; overcome by much that he had of late undergone, toil and want of food, as he thought of the poor sinking Frenchman, for whose comfort he had hoped to do so much, his heart was wrung, and an emotion gathered in it, not unlike that described by Cobbett, the M.P., when, as a poor private soldier, he lost

in his barrack the only halfpenny he had in the world, and adds, "I drew my rug over my head and wept."

He was loth to disappoint his friend of the hope held out to him, and felt the dire necessity of getting him the little comfort required. Close by was an officer's hut, so he now resolved to make there the request from which he had previously shrunk nervously.

Half hut, half tent, a light, and voices conversing merrily, encouraged him to approach, and he knocked on the extemporised door of plank and wattles.

"Come in," cried a voice authoritatively.

Entering, he found himself face to face with the very man he wished to avoid—Colonel Kingsmuir, for the abode was his, and the two friends who were with him proved to be Bertie Slingsby, of the Coldstreams, and his cousin, Sir Harry Drake.

Confusion, and a certain sense of mortification, were the first emotions of Julian, who felt his head begin to swim.

"Why, fellow, you are tipsy," said Colonel Kingsmuir.

"Excuse me, sir—I certainly feel giddy,"

faltered Julian, as the well-remembered voice of other days fell on his ear ; “ I have had much hard work in the advanced trenches of late, and have been without food for many hours.”

“ How about the wine I gave you at Balaclava, not an hour since ? ” asked Drake.

“ It was of that I came here to speak, venturing to the hut because it was that of an officer,” said Julian, and then modestly, firmly, and distinctly, he told his little story, and ended by begging from Colonel Kingsmuir a little wine—not for himself—but for the wounded Frenchman.

“ Oh—aw—it was you, then, that General Bosquet and I met near the Woronzow road, carrying a wounded Zouave ? ” said the Colonel.

“ Yes, sir.”

“ By Jove you are a fine fellow ! There is a bottle of sherry to replace what Sir Harry gave you ; and drink this—you seem to want it,” said the kind Colonel, filling a bumper of the same wine, and handing it to Julian, whom Sir Harry was still eyeing curiously and dubiously, while twirling his now bushy moustache.

There was now much of hauteur in his bearing toward the private soldier, the *simple soldat*; the Crimea, its *camaraderie* and its miseries vanished, and London, with its memories and influences, took its place.

Though Julian loved and longed for the kindly recognition of such men as those in whose presence he stood, his innate pride made him shrink from it; he always felt himself to be the Lord Hermitage, nervously sensitive of patronage, gossip, or ridicule; and with the untold secret of being so, he would die, and, at times, cared little how soon. He was about to withdraw, with a low bow, as occasionally he forgot the salute inculcated by discipline, when the Colonel, who was standing, now spoke again.

"I have been given to understand that you were the advanced sentinel whom the Russian spy deceived by showing a dead man's permit?"

"Yes, sir."

"You would know that scoundrel again?"

"Among a thousand, sir, and I did so in the late sortie."

"He was killing the wounded?" asked Bertie Slingsby.

“With his own sword, and inciting others.”

“A lonely post like that should have sharpened your wits, young fellow,” said Sir Harry Drake.

“I have felt lonelier in the Strand,” said Julian, dreamily.

“Are you a Londoner?” asked the Colonel.

“No, sir, a Scotsman.”

“Ah—your name is Melville. From what part of Scotland?”

Now, thought Julian, with irritation, the mask will be torn from me! Thus he answered, vaguely,

“From the south country.”

Now, though Julian had sat scores of times at the Colonel’s dinner-table at Kingsmuir, so completely had he passed out of the Colonel’s life, or sphere, that even his voice failed to induce recognition. The Colonel could not see the whole of Julian’s face; his bearskin cap and brass chain, with his moustache and beard, hid much of it; yet he could see that the features were clearly cut, and delicate; the mouth full and sweet, yet firm in its curve, and that though his uniform was verging on the ragged, he looked a picture, while his gloveless hands

were shapely, white, and more delicate than one usually saw in the ranks—and, more than all, could see in those days of trench work before Sebastopol.

He regarded the young man with vague, but growing interest; for the classically-cut face he possessed, if it indicated sweetness of disposition, also showed much of suffering, humiliation, and indifference of death.

In its contour—but not at all in its expression—it reminded him of another face, he could not then say *whose* face; but the one hovering in his memory was that of his own son-in-law, the Earl.

Moreover, he had only seen Julian in the night, when, amid a dense mist, and fierce attempt to scour our trenches, the latter had saved his life and remounted him; but now he fully believed that the gallant fellow for whom he had made so many futile inquiries had fallen in action.

“You speak with a strange tone of despondence, young man,” said the Colonel; “do you not like soldiering?”

“I do, sir. Apart from the glory of it, when here under fire, a fellow is cured from

always thinking of what might have been, by the knowledge that a bullet may the next minute make it of no account; once we are dead, all things are alike in the end. The general and the drum-boy, the king and the clown, lie all alike in their graves."

"You seem to be a philosopher," said the Colonel, laughing.

"He is the queerest fellow I ever came across," said Bertie Slingsby, with a languid drawl; "and yet, by Jove, I like him."

"Work is a blessing, sir," said Julian, dreamily, as if speaking to himself; "it saves many a heart from breaking; and work we have in plenty before Sebastopol."

"And rather infernal work it is," said Sir Harry, as Julian laughed bitterly, saluted and withdrew, betaking himself at once to his hut before tattoo roll-call. "There is," said the Colonel, "a touch in all this, of the sad, that savours of some disappointed or wasted life."

"Of bosh, rather!" exclaimed Sir Harry, thinking pettishly of the affair of the handkerchief.

"Don't say so; I think better of the

young man. He has, depend upon it, a history."

"So has every casual and pauper."

"How can you be so severe; it is not like your usual genial self, Harry Drake," said the Colonel, almost with anger in his tone.

END OF VOL. II.







